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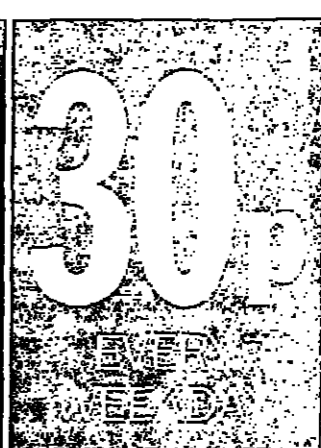
## THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MAN WHO WON POWER FOR BLAIR

Obsessed with beautiful people  
Michael Gove page 3

Money, sex and Labour  
Anthony Howard page 4

Blair's worst 48 hours  
Peter Riddell page 16

Not dead, just resting  
Mary Ann Sieghart page 16



# New Labour's darkest day

## Mandelson and Robinson resign

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

LABOUR and Tony Blair suffered their darkest day yesterday as a devastated Peter Mandelson resigned from the Government he had spent his political life trying to get elected.

In the biggest blow imaginable to the new Labour project, the Trade Secretary quit over his £573,000 home loan from Geoffrey Robinson — who spitefully followed him out of the Government.

Mr Robinson, the Paymaster General, had been planning in any case to resign over the next few days, having been under pressure for months over his business dealings.

Caught up in the middle of a new furor about the loan he made to his friend Mr Mandelson two years ago, he bowed to the inevitable and at least enabled Downing Street to handle two pieces of bad news as one.

But Mr Blair went into Christmas facing a crisis he could not have dreamed of a week ago. Friends admitted that confidence in Mr Mandelson's ability to survive had drained away on Tuesday.

Apart from the personal tragedy of a resignation just 150 days after entering the Cabinet, Mr Mandelson's departure represented a serious threat to Mr Blair's new Labour direction. He was replaced at the DTI by another Blairite, Stephen Byers, who moves from Chief Secretary to the Treasury, with Alan Milburn, Health Minister and a fellow moderniser, entering the Cabinet to take over from Mr Byers. However, Mr Blair has lost from the Cabinet one



### INSIDE

- Spin doctor's art.....2
- Flawed hero.....3
- Byers' market.....4
- Gifts inquiry.....5
- Peter Riddell.....16
- Mary Ann Sieghart.....16
- Diary.....16
- Leading article.....17
- Letters.....17
- Unions seek rethink.....21
- Commentary.....23

of the heavyweight supporters and founders of Labour modernisation and, along with Jack Cunningham, its most enthusiastic pro-European.

Mr Mandelson, who spent Tuesday fighting to save his job with a rush of media interviews, had decided by late in the evening that he had failed. He telephoned Mr Blair at about 10pm and, in an emotional exchange, told him that he was angry with himself for landing the Government in trouble, wished he had never borrowed the money to buy his Notting Hill home, wished that he had told Mr Blair and others about it and added that, while he did not feel he had done anything wrong, he had been unwise.

He told Mr Blair that he intended to resign. He was told

to sleep on it and talk again yesterday morning. In another conversation at around 10am he confirmed his decision and Mr Blair did not attempt to dissuade him, agreeing with him that he should go because of what Mr Blair himself saw as a serious lapse of judgment. An informed source said: "He knows he made a colossal error borne of his desire to have a certain lifestyle."

The departure sent shock waves through a political world already staggered that he had got himself into such a mess. "I can scarcely believe I am writing this letter to you," he told Mr Blair in his resignation note.

Mr Mandelson gave as his main reason for going his desire for the Government to be seen to be maintaining the highest standards in public life. He had argued that he had avoided a conflict of interest over the DTI inquiries into Mr Robinson's business affairs by having nothing to do with them. But he admitted that he should have told his permanent secretary, Michael Scholar, and Mr Blair about the loan. He also confessed that he should not "with all candour" have even entered into the loan arrangement.

The parliamentary watchdog is also to investigate whether Mr Mandelson broke Commons rules by not declaring the loan in the Register of Members' Interests. And mystery remains over whether he had declared it in his application for a £150,000 mortgage to buy a £475,000 house.

Last night Mr Mandelson left the DTI after a glass of champagne with his private staff. Red-eyed, he gave a series of interviews in which he said he had to go to protect both his and the Government's reputation. "We have worked all these years to create new Labour, to demonstrate that the standards of government and of behaviour



Peter Mandelson leaving the Department of Trade for the last time after a glass of champagne with staff last night. His friends expect him to bounce back once he has recovered from the blow to his reputation

### 'We're going to get on with our lives'

By James Landale, Political Correspondent

GEOFFREY ROBINSON yesterday blamed his political downfall on a 12-month Tory vendetta against him as he resigned as Paymaster General.

In an interview with the BBC, the millionaire former minister said: "I think the attacks on the Government had come to a point which was not acceptable any more for the Government or the Prime Minister. From the Government's point of view there comes a point where there's such an intensity of continuing allegation that people get fed up with it."

He denied that his position had become untenable and insisted the Government was still in a strong position. "The Government is going to go on, we have done a lot of good things. I'm very proud of all we have achieved."

After announcing his resignation's only hours after Peter Mandelson, he added: "Two decisions have been taken. We're both going to get on with our lives and that will be good."

Mr Robinson was brought into government to provide a vital link to industry. But he ended up being dogged by accusations about his business dealings. In a letter to Mr Blair, he said that after "a highly charged political campaign" against him for 12 months, it was right to go.

in public life were going to be restored permanently.

"In my action I allowed the impression to be created that we had fallen below those high standards. I had to do something radical to restore people's faith in this Government, their confidence in ministers and also their regard for my own integrity. I believe that re-

mains intact, but a different impression was being created.

"In resigning and paying such a high price, I hope I have shown politicians not only how to behave well in every respect but they also have to appear to behave well on all occasions."

In his letter accepting Mr Mandelson's resignation, Mr

Blair offered the warmest tribute to his friend saying that "without your support and advice we would never have built new Labour". He continued: "It was typical of you, when we spoke last night, that your thought was for the reputation of the Labour Party and the Government."

Continued on page 2, col 3

## Politicians — they're all the same

Matthew Parris hears the voice of the mob

Yesterday morning I heard the first cuckoo of the political season. The song seems set to swell, and new Labour might as well get used to it: "They're all the same."

"They're all the same," said my minicab driver en route for Euston station, before 10am, before Peter Mandelson had even resigned.

"They're all the same," said the florist at Euston.

I boarded the train and was met by a friend at Northampton. "It's getting to feel like the last days of the Tories."

"Politicians — they're all the same," he said. "You know what people will say, don't you? 'They're all the same.'"

We drove up to Derbyshire. I visited Bakeswell, passed a friend in the street.

"Politicians — they're all the same," he said, "in it for themselves."

And so the cry goes up. Has ever a corporate identity, so assiduously assembled by so many at Millbank for so long, been ruined so fast? Has ever a more earnest and relentless campaign

to educate the public into distinguishing one political product from another been so cruelly detonated? New Labour's City of Dreams has been more comprehensively wrecked in two nights of media bombing than anything Tony Blair could organise for Baghdad. And all with one easy, lazy, little sentiment, "they're all the same": a lethal weapon, worse than anthrax.

But of course they are not all the same. The voice of the mob is very strong in British politics and the mob wants to believe — has always wanted to believe — that the powers-that-be are lining their own nests, "in it for themselves".

It isn't true. Consider the celebrated resignations of recent years. Almost every one has been about foolishness, lapse of judgement, arrogance: almost none has been about real corruption.

How common is it in our national poli-

tics that a senior politician tries to enrich himself at the citizen's expense? How common is it that decisions of national importance have been skewed by sex or money?

It almost never happens. Almost always we indict our politicians for misdeeds; how rarely do we find they did act corruptly. Once we have tipped the entire vocabulary of horror and disapproval on Mandelson's head, it's worth reflecting that nobody has suggested that he ever took any departmental decision on any basis other than the national interest, or would dream of doing so. His sins were much smaller.

But they were so easy to understand. We know about mortgages. We know what houses cost. We understand personal loans. Mandelson was therefore dislodged within hours of his critics' first attack. Geoffrey Robinson took

nearly a year to go — yet he was the more dispensable of the two and the charges against him include far more serious criticisms than can be levelled at Mandelson. But they were complicated. Start talking about the accounting arrangements of Maxwell subsidiaries, tax avoidance through discretionary offshore trusts — and my minicab driver, my friends in Bakeswell, I too, begin to flounder.

We understand adultery. Parkinson had to go. We enjoyed the stories about David Mellor. Tim Yeo had an illegitimate child. But we never got to the bottom of Maxwell's corruption — we hardly tried — and he escaped.

Mandelson, whose public spiritedness I think few would question, fell easily because his jury have applied for mortgages. Nobody who knows him really thinks he acted wickedly. The more serious the indictment, the harder it can be to make it stick. They are not all the same, but some of the more trivial are a lot easier to understand.

## 8-year curfew for rapist

A rapist who attacked students as they slept was ordered to observe a night-time curfew for the next eight years.

Manchester magistrates imposed the order at the request of the police after Michael Gordon, who served seven years of a 12-year sentence, was seen prowling around the Rushmore area of the city where he had committed his crimes. Page 7

## Wet Christmas on the way

By Susie Steiner and Arthur Leathley

WEATHER forecasters have dashed hopes of snow tomorrow, predicting Christmas across Britain will yet again be wet rather than white. "We are predicting another mild, damp and often windy Christmas period," said a Met Office spokesman.

Last night heavy rain and fog intensified huge tailbacks on the busiest motorways — as

thousands of motorists tried to defy the pre-Christmas rush expected today. Motoring organisations reported a rapid increase in traffic on the M25, M1 and M6 as many left work early in an attempt to find clear roads.

While a record 750,000 people are planning to spend Christmas abroad, determined snow-seekers at home will have to head for the Scottish mountains, where some powder may settle tomorrow

evening before northern parts of the country succumb to Boxing Day storms.

"It's time to batten down the hatches for Saturday evening when a storm, which has the potential for damaging winds, is expected to rush in from the Atlantic," the forecaster said. The South will have a mild Christmas Day, with temperatures reaching 12C, and it will be damp on Boxing Day.

Forecast, page 20

## Call-up for the children

A group of primary schoolgirls have been named in the Welsh squad to take on England in the annual under-25s women's international bowls match.

Rebecca Shore, at nine the youngest international bowls player, is joined by three ten-year-olds: her sister Rachel, their clubmate Rachel Millard, and Angharad Jones. Hannah Smith, at 12, is almost a veteran. Page 40

### INSIDE TODAY

Eat up, drink up... Christmas is good for you  
By Stuart Ford page 12  
Two pages of TV: 38, 39  
Sporting crossword page 37

### BOXING DAY

We're back with complete sport action, metro, Vision and WEEKEND

- TV & RADIO.....38,39
- WEATHER.....40
- CROSSWORDS.....26,29,40
- LETTERS.....17
- OBITUARIES.....19
- PETER RIDDELL.....17
- ARTS.....14,15
- COURT & SOCIAL.....18
- BOOKS.....28
- BODY & MIND.....12

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AND SO TO BED



The life and times of Peter Mandelson: an enthusiastic Scout in the early days; at the Labour Party Conference in 1987; on the campaign trail in Hartlepool in 1992 and how Spitting Image saw his relationship with Tony Blair in 1998

# Spin doctor's art couldn't save his hide

PETER Mandelson's world collapsed late on Tuesday night during an emotional telephone call to the Prime Minister, in which he conceded for the first time that he might have to resign.

After an exhausting 24 hours, during which the spin doctor within him had used all his media skills to fight for his political life, Mr Mandelson was reaching a conclusion that his friends in Downing Street had been coming to all day. He told Mr Blair that he had been "imprudent" and said that his relentless tour of the TV and radio studios trying to defend himself was a "pretty wretched experience".

As the pair talked — Mr Blair had travelled to Chequers earlier in the evening — a hint of the 10pm television headlines coupled with news of the first Fleet Street editions beginning to drop confirmed that Mr Mandelson's tactics of aggressive rebuttal had failed. Realising that the tide had turned irrevocably against him and that his chances of survival were slim, the then Trade Secretary told Mr Blair that he regretted almost everything to do with the affair.

He wished he had never taken out such a large loan; he wished he had told the Prime

**Roland Watson**  
on how a master of damage control lost the most important battle of his career

Minister and others about it at the time; he wished he had told the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry as soon as it became clear that his own department was investigating Geoffrey Robinson. He told Mr Blair that he thought he could tough it out, but he believed it was best to resign.

If Mr Mandelson was looking for any hint of encouragement from the Prime Minister that he could remain in office, he did not receive one. Mr Blair told him to sleep on it, and that he would return to it in the morning.

In the meantime, the Prime Minister studied the relevant Government papers on the issue before turning in for the night. He had had internal documents, but not details of Mr Mandelson's mortgage de-

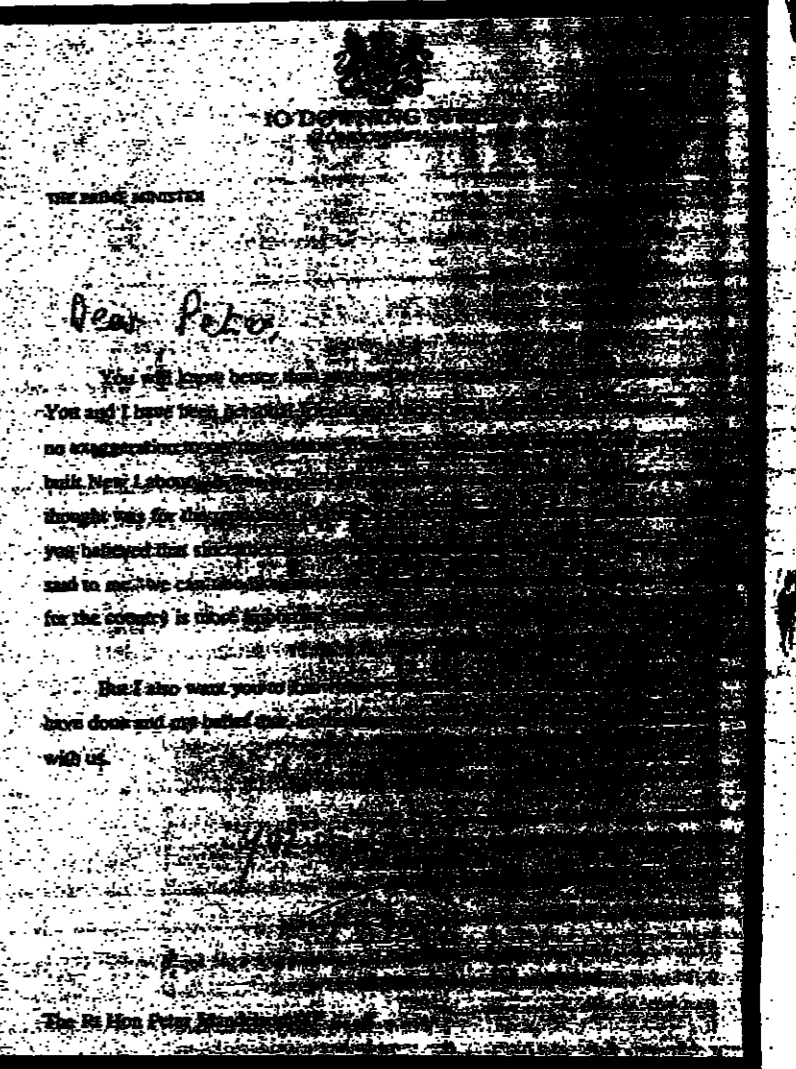
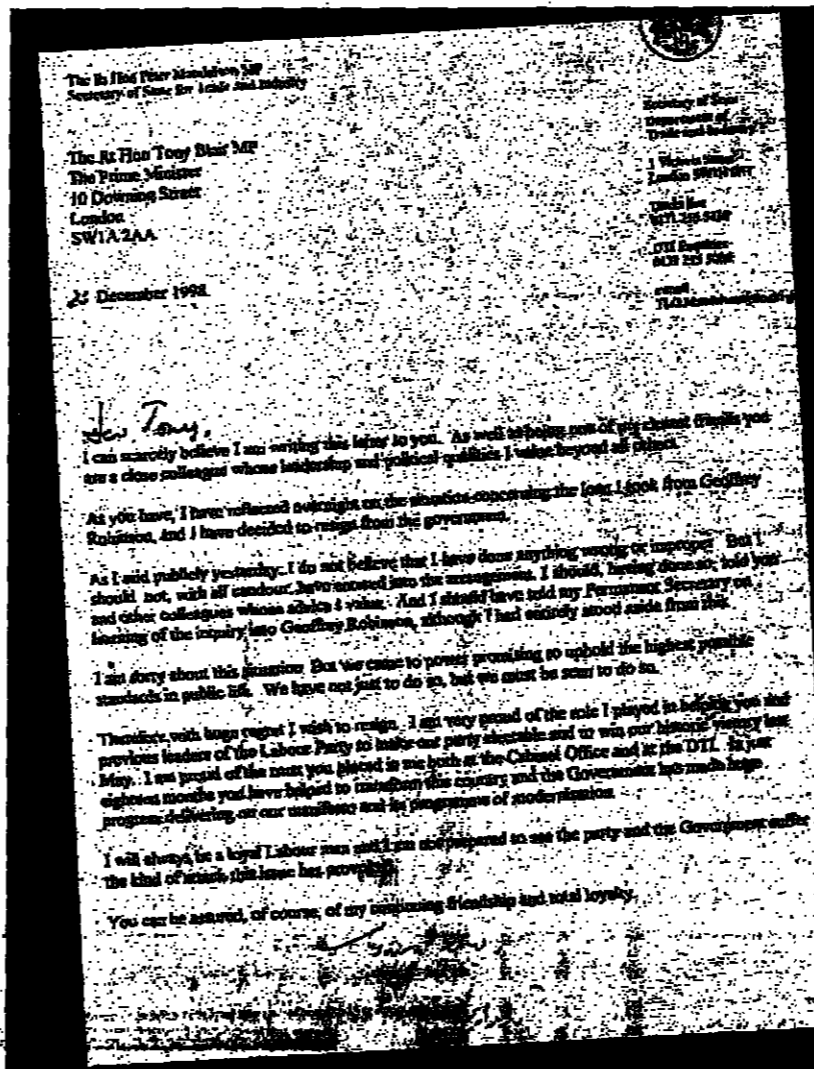
livered to Chequers earlier in the evening. The following morning, the pair talked again shortly after 10am. Mr Mandelson said that his mind was made up. In the cold light of day it was clear to him that he had to resign. The Prime Minister concurred, having realised the previous night that it was the only possible outcome. If Mr Mandelson had wanted to struggle on, Mr Blair would certainly have pushed him.

The timebomb which exploded yesterday started ticking last Thursday after a speculative inquiry from a Sunday newspaper. Mr Mandelson was immediately alerted that one of his best-kept secrets — how he had paid for a £465,000 house on a £43,000 salary — was about to be blown open.

He rang Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, who told Mr Blair. The Prime Minister was due to address the Commons on the bombing raids over Iraq that had begun the night before, and on being told the news "looked at his watch". He contacted Sir Richard Wilson, the Cabinet Secretary, asking him to establish whether there had been a conflict of interest.

Sir Richard rang Michael Scholar, the permanent secretary at the DTI, and was assured that all steps had been taken to "insulate" Mr Mandelson. But, crucially, Mr Mandelson admitted that he had not mentioned to Mr Scholar upon joining the department that he had taken a loan from Mr Robinson.

The message was relayed back to Mr Blair, via Sir Rich-



Dear Tony. Dear Peter: Mandelson's resignation letter, and Blair's reply, eventually came after a "wretched" 24 hours of trying to defend himself

ard, that there was no conflict of interest. But the question of whether Mr Mandelson should have disclosed his loan, especially when the DTI began investigating Mr Robinson, remained open.

Mr Mandelson knew that the matter would not stop there. His office was aware that Paul Routledge, the *Mirror* journalist writing an unauthorised biography of Mr Mandelson to be published in the new year, also had the story. At the weekend, Mr Mandelson considered voluntarily releasing details of his loan. He told Mr Campbell that it was bound to come out, and sought to lay the blame for any imminent leak on his political enemies in the Treasury, notably

Charlie Whelan, the Chancellor's press secretary.

Within 24 hours the story had broken in *The Guardian*. The theory favoured by the Mandelson camp is that it did indeed come from those around Gordon Brown. Another, more conspiratorial but believed by some in Westminster, is that Mr Mandelson's friends leaked the story to steal Mr Routledge's thunder.

Even before *The Guardian* had dropped on Monday night, Mr Mandelson had launched his defence. Calling on years of experience in advising fellow Labour politicians in scrapes, his self-justification appeared on the BBC's *Nine O'Clock News*.

"I do not believe that accept-

ing a loan from a friend of mine and fellow member of parliament was wrong. There is no conflict of interest in this," he said in a statement released that night.

The following morning he went into overdrive, hitting out at whoever "seeped information into the press in what is calculated to be a harmful way" and portraying himself as the injured party.

He said that he did not know who had leaked the information "in a negative and mischievous way that deliberately misconstrues my actions and places very unsympathetic construction on my actions".

Listeners of BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme fall to understand who the victim

was, he added: "Who likes being kicked around in the press in the way that I have been?"

By mid-afternoon on Tuesday, a separate front had opened up against him. London's *Evening Standard* accused him of concealing the truth when two years ago he told them that he had bought his Notting Hill house with monies from the sale of his flat in Clerkenwell and family legacies. His response was again to get his defence in first. Before the Opposition could get off the mark, Mr Mandelson effectively referred himself to the new Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Elizabeth Filkin. He wrote: "Given the substantial media interest in the circumstances of the

loan, I think it appropriate that I should refer the matter to you."

But further cracks begin to open in his defence. Midway through Tuesday Mr Mandelson had told viewers of ITN's lunchtime news that he had conformed with all legal requirements when filling in his mortgage application form. Later that evening, he appeared not so sure. His spokesman said that he could not "recall details of an application form filled in two years ago".

Mr Mandelson may have tried to spin his way out of trouble. But in the end it was his political antennae which told him that he had to go — certainly if he ever wants to stage a comeback.

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## Dark day

Continued from page 1

Mr Mandelson, who is to spend Christmas with his mother, was reported last night to be relieved "that he has done the right thing". A close confidant said that he would "bounce back", a view encouraged by the final sentence of Mr Blair's letter which said that he would "achieve much, more with us".

Mr Robinson said in his resignation letter that after 12 months of a "highly charged political campaign" he had reached the point where it was right to go.

The businessman insisted that he had not mistimed his position either as a minister or a MP. And he said in his letter to Mr Blair, that in lending Mr Mandelson the £373,000 that led to his downfall, he considered himself as "someone in a position to help a long-standing friend with no request for anything in return".

The Conservatives, delighted to have secured two prize scalps, promised to keep up the attack. Peter Lilley, deputy leader, said: "Mandelson went because he broke the rules. What is extraordinary is that the Prime Minister could not see, or did not care, that the rules were broken. His Government's reputation has been badly damaged."

The Liberal Democrat Treasury spokesman Malcolm Bruce said: "There is a stark contrast between the swift and honourable resignation of Peter Mandelson and the belated and grudging resignation of Geoffrey Robinson."

## Police could study building society files

**BY CAROLINE MERRELL AND SUSAN EMMETT**

THE Britannia, the building society at the centre of the Peter Mandelson loan scandal, could refer the £150,000 mortgage application of the former Trade and Industry Secretary to the police.

It also emerged yesterday that Elizabeth Filkin, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, who has been asked to investigate the terms of the Mandelson loan, is a board director of the Britannia.

Ms Filkin, who could not be reached yesterday, is expected shortly to step down as a Britannia non-executive director because of a potential conflict of interest.

Yesterday a Britannia spokeswoman refused to confirm or deny whether the police had been contacted about the loan. She said that any alleged falsification of loan applications was not a matter for the society to investigate; cases were passed over to the police. She said: "The key is that there has to be evidence that an offence has been committed."

She also refused to say whether the society had looked at Mr Mandelson's form, but added that it would be a mat-

## Christmas with mother beckons

**BY MARK INGLEFIELD POLITICAL REPORTER**

PETER MANDELSON is to spend Christmas with his mother in London, an arrangement he had made before his resignation.

"It is going to be a different Christmas to the one I had been expecting, with my mother and family, enjoying Christmas," he said. His mother, Mary, lives in Hampstead Garden Suburb, in North London.

Friends said, however, that Mr Mandelson, who had intended to stay in London for Christmas and the New Year, is likely to arrange a holiday abroad soon after Christmas in an attempt to take the heat out of the situation.

Geoffrey Robinson may also be forced to reconsider his own holiday arrangements. He had intended to stay at his house in Godalming, Surrey. However, like Mr Mandelson, he will be keen to step out of the publicity spotlight.

The Prime Minister's Christmas arrangements may also have to change but for reasons unrelated to the resignations. While Mr Blair will go ahead with his plan to spend a few days at Chequers, a trip to the Seychelles may be disrupted by a visit to the Gulf.

## MPs' rules 'breached in spirit only'

**BY JILL SHERMAN CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT**

PETER MANDELSON kept to his line that he had not breached either the ministerial code of conduct or the MPs' code last night but he did admit in his letter of resignation that with hindsight he should have never accepted the loan.

He also said that he should have told the Prime Minister at the time, and Michael Scholar, the DTI Permanent Secretary, as soon as the department started its investigation into Geoffrey Robinson.

While he may not have breached the letter of the code, Mr Mandelson has all but conceded that he breached the spirit of the rules that cover ministers by failing to declare the loan to his Permanent Secretary. The code states ministers "must scrupulously avoid any danger of an actual or apparent conflict of interest between their ministerial position and their private financial interests".

It also states: "No minister or public servant should accept gifts, hospitality or services from anyone which would, or might appear to, place him or her under an obligation."

The code bars ministers from keeping any gift worth more than £140, but it is unclear whether a loan falls into that category. There is also doubt about whether Mr Mandelson is under an obligation to Mr Robinson after accepting such a huge loan. On typical building society rates, Mr Mandelson has already saved £10,000.

More importantly, the code tells ministers that they may wish to take their permanent secretaries' advice where they fear actual or perceived conflict of interest may arise.

It adds: "It is in the end for ministers to judge [subject to the Prime Minister's decision in cases of doubt] what action they need to take; but they should record, in a minute to the Permanent Secretary, whether or not they consider any action necessary."

The rules covering MPs were changed in July 1996 three months before the loan was taken out. The definition of gift was changed to include loans. The new rules state that loan concessions or any arrangement at a cost below that generally available to the members of the public should be registered.



The public faces of Peter Mandelson: touring Cambridge Design Technology; at Kellingley Colliery, Yorkshire; relaxing in Disney World, Florida and losing his famous composure as he talked in a BBC interview about his father's death

# Door closes on Labour's flawed hero

Obsession with the 'beautiful people' has cost him his most cherished acquisition, says Michael Gove

PETER MANDELSON'S Nottingham Hill home has become a minimalist mausoleum to one of Britain's shortest Cabinet careers. After only 150 days as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry he has been deprived of that around which his whole life had been built. The most cherished of all the acquisitions in his home, the ministerial red box, has gone. And with it, for now, have vanished the hopes that he might one day succeed his grandfather, Herbert Morrison, as Foreign Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister. Mr Morrison was Foreign Secretary for just over seven months, Mr Mandelson a Cabinet Minister for a bare five. The minister's brief encounter with real power has ended in tears.

Talking to Mr Mandelson at a private party in Nottingham just two weeks ago it was impossible not to be struck by the sheer pleasure his Cabinet status gave him. There was a lightness in his conversation, a winning self-mockery, which spoke of matchless confidence. The Secretary of State chose to take issue with a suggestion in *The Times* that his left-wing roots had been showing when he scorned the idea of General Pinochet claiming diplomatic immunity.

"I want you to know how hurt I am," he declared, "I've never had any left-wing roots." This provocative, slightly unsettling statement was the essence of the Mandelson method. But the ability to make a joke at the expense of his own image as a closet Tory reflected a man more in his element than ever. His parting shot — "I must go, the red box is waiting" — carried with it a deep

## THE CAREER

sense of anticipation, as though he was hurrying to see an expectant loved one. And now they have been separated. Mr Mandelson was groomed for the top in his cot. Born into Labour's aristocracy, his mother was a cherished daughter of Herbert Morrison and Harold Wilson was a family friend. But Mr Mandelson's progress through Labour's ranks has been a consequence of his individual genius as much as his family's genes.

Tony Blair may have been the new Labour "messiah" but Mr Mandelson can claim to have been Blair's Moses and John the Baptist as well as his Peter. He helped to lead Labour out of the wilderness, taking on the job of communications supremo in 1985 when the party was in danger of being overtaken by the Alliance. He secured Labour's position as the main opposition party with an inspired but still doomed campaign in 1987, replacing donkey jackets with designer suits and ensuring there was a red rose in every buttonhole.

He went on to lay the foundations for the party's electability in 1992 and engineered his own entry into Parliament as member for Hartlepool. But that silver lining had its cloud. His single-minded approach to modernisation infuriated the party's traditionalists.

In particular his projection of a few favoured Shadow Cabinet "stars", the so-called "beautiful people", put several mottled noses out of joint. It must now seem to Mr Mandelson, this bleak midwinter

morning, that an obsession with beautiful people has been his tragic flaw.

It led to his first period of internal exile, under a suspicious John Smith, who detected the modishness of Mandelson. The Hartlepool MP was so marginalised under Mr Smith that he had to save up shopping expeditions for Sundays in order to fill his weekends.

That earlier period of exile ended, however, with the election of Tony Blair. It was an election that Mr Mandelson nevertheless had to manage from the shadows.

The process of rendering Labour electable had involved the abandonment of policies dear to the party's old guard. Their anger found a focus in Mr Mandelson, and so sulphurous was his reputation in traditionalist eyes he had to be kept in the background during Mr Blair's leadership election. Referred to only by the code-name "Bobby", his involvement was hidden from all save a few intimates.

In a curious inversion, the messianic Mr Blair had to deny his Peter.

But the election of Mr Blair saw the slow emergence of Mr Mandelson from the shadows to take his place at the leader's right hand. He laid the foundations for the party's election strategy, pioneering campaigning techniques with rare focus and ruthlessness. He championed Labour as a low-tax party, appropriated the British bulldog and, most ferociously of all, made sizzle a central issue at the last election.

He used scardal to cut off ministerial careers in his prime and overthrow the Tories' ancient regime. Now, like



Welcome home: a pot of flowers left on the doorstep of the Mandelson home

Robespierre, he has been claimed by the guillotine he once deployed with relish.

His own ministerial career seemed set fair for success. He had managed to impress corporate Britain with a business-friendly face, and sweeten socialists such as his deputy, Ian McCartney, with honeyed words. But there was still a presumptuousness, an arrogance in even the meaneast

dealing, which smacked of hubris.

When passing lowly Labour colleagues in the Commons he would smile, incline his head and then, turning to his assistant, ask loudly, "Ben, who is that?" His friendships with the Prince of Wales, Carla Rowell, James Pahlmo and countless other social butterflies infuriated the worker bees at Westminster. There will be many a La-

bour traditionalist laughing into their bitter this Christmas Eve.

Mr Mandelson may find some of those beautiful people a little less eager to extend the old invitations this new year. If, however, he can learn to tame his social ambition, then there may be an opportunity for him to once again enjoy the company he cherishes most — that of his ministerial box.

## 150 DAYS

- DAY 1 (July 27):** appointed Trade and Industry Secretary: "I recognise that as a Cabinet minister I'm going to have to become more grey and platitudinal in what I say."
- DAY 2:** drops President of the Board of Trade title. "It is hard work to create prosperity for Britain's hard-working families that I am interested in, not pompous titles."
- DAY 10 (August 5):** urges Cabinet to follow Gordon Brown in declining pay rise: "We have to take our cue from the Chancellor. He has given a very strong lead to date. He brings a great deal of common sense and firm judgment on these matters."
- DAY 13 (August 8):** complaint to *The Guardian* (which later broke Robinson loan story): "It would be nice for *Guardian* journalists to give me the chance to do my job at the DTI properly."
- DAY 53 (September 17):** first speech to TUC. Calls unions his friends. Pledges: "No more spin, honest."
- DAY 59 (September 23):** makes first major decision — to block Labrokes' planned purchase of Coral betting shops. Merger would "damage competition and disadvantage punters".
- DAY 66 (September 30):** vows Labour conference delegates with self-deprecating humour: "I am an optimist and, believe me, when you're Minister for the Dome, I have to be."
- DAY 67 (October 1):** then slips up at fringe meeting, attacking quotas for "blue-collar, working-class, northern, horny-handed, dirty-overalled people".
- DAY 74 (October 8):** offers coal industry lifeline in Energy White Paper: "I am not passing down some God-given right for Mr Budge [Richard Budge, the biggest coal producer] to produce coal."
- DAY 83 (October 17):** unlikely hero of the left as General Pinochet arrested: "The idea that such a brutal dictator could claim diplomatic immunity, I think, for most people in this country would be pretty gut-wrenching stuff."
- DAY 93 (October 27):** named as a homosexual member of the Cabinet on *Newsnight*: "My private life is just that, private."
- DAY 95 (October 29):** refers BSkyB bid for Manchester United to MMC, despite friendship with Elisabeth Murdoch, BSkyB executive and daughter of Rupert.
- DAY 101 (November 4):** justifies pre-Budget leak to select committee: "I was acting as John the Baptist. That is my role with the Chancellor."
- DAY 121 (November 24):** private life resurfaces with William Hague's jibe about "Lord Mandelson of Rio".
- DAY 136 (December 7):** accused of ducking challenge of privatising Post Office. Says more limited reforms are "bright new dawn".
- DAY 137 (December 8):** defends Dome against critics, likening himself to "poor old grandfather" — Herbert Morrison who was "beset by critics and snipers and shoved, kicked and dragged through the mud for years, as I am now" over the Festival of Britain.
- DAY 143 (December 16):** dons protective specs to launch competitiveness White Paper. Tells Britain to "wake up and beat the world" with a "knowledge-driven economy".
- DAY 144 (December 17):** waters down union rights in Fairness at Work Bill: "We intend to build in measures to ensure recognition procedure functions effectively and creditably."
- DAY 148 (December 21):** admits accepting loan from Geoffrey Robinson: "I do not believe that accepting a loan from a friend and fellow MP was wrong. There is no conflict of interest."
- DAY 150 (December 23):** resigns from Government: "I do not believe that I have done anything wrong or improper. But I should not, with all candour, have entered into the arrangement."

# Hartlepool sends condolences

By PAUL WILKINSON

THE mood in Peter Mandelson's Hartlepool constituency last night was one of sadness. The news that he had left the Government broke just as the local newspaper published an opinion poll showing that most people did not see the loan affair as a resigning matter, although they did think that he had acted improperly.

In an interview with the *Hartlepool Mail*, given minutes after he announced his resignation, the former Trade and Industry Secretary said: "I have never let down the people of Hartlepool. I have always championed their cause. I will continue to do so with equal enthusiasm and even more time."

Under normal circumstances this would not have been a resigning issue but this is not a normal Government. We have higher standards and I have higher standards. I misjudged the situation. The only way public confidence is going to be maintained is if ministers act properly and are seen to act properly. When you make a mistake, you have to pay a price."

Peter Barron, the paper's Editor, said: "His argument

## CONSTITUENCY

that he has not breached any guidelines is very flimsy. I believe he committed a grave error of judgment. The message we were getting from the people of Hartlepool was that they were deeply suspicious about what had gone on."

"This is a sad day for Hartlepool. I cannot believe a man of such political talent has been so unbelievably naive."

A hundred constituents had been asked: "Has Mr Mandelson acted improperly?" — 57 said yes, 37 said no. They were also asked: "Should Mr Man-

delson resign as a minister?" Fifty-eight said he should not, 37 that he should.

Steve Wallace, Mr Mandelson's agent, said the MP was "devastated" after quitting and that the resignation demonstrated his integrity. Mr Wallace said: "Peter relished every minute of the DTI job. The fact he has resigned underlines what an honourable man he is. He realises that the publicity has not been good."

"He not only wants to show the Government is whiter than white but that it also should be seen to be whiter than white. It is obvious he has done nothing wrong and

that the arrangement for the loan for his house was done privately between friends.

"Unfortunately, it has given political opponents an opportunity to criticise him and it has led to his resignation. He is an honest man who has done a lot of good as MP for Hartlepool and as Trade Secretary. I am very sad. Peter could have weathered this storm and held on to a job which he was very good at."

Ray Waller, leader of Hartlepool council, said: "It is a tragedy that one of the finest brains in Government has had to resign but we support him for having done the hon-

ourable thing." Mr Waller hoped that Mr Mandelson's "outstanding abilities" could eventually be used "for Hartlepool, the region and the Labour Government in another capacity."

There was also sympathy among Christmas shoppers. Stephen McCormack, 28, a factory worker, said: "I thought he should have stuck it out. He has done a lot for Hartlepool. It was a dreary place before he came here. But there has been a lot of change and it is the best I have seen the town."

Thomas Legg, 19, said: "I don't think he should have quit. He just borrowed money after all, he never hurt anyone. I think he has done a good job for the town and I hope he carries on doing so."

Angela Storm, another student, was less impressed. "He doesn't really care about us so why should we care about him?"

But Philip Ash, a bus driver, was sorry that Mr Mandelson had gone. "He has done a good job for Hartlepool. It will please the Opposition as he is the strength of the party. He probably shouldn't have done what he did but I still support him as my MP."

# Prince of PR could earn £1m a year

By RICHARD FORD  
HOME CORRESPONDENT

HIS skills as the "Prince of PR" and his access to the top echelons of the Government could earn Peter Mandelson £1 million a year, according to City headhunters.

But there would be a price for accepting such lucrative work: his political career. The former Trade and Industry Secretary could not hope to rejoin ministerial ranks if he chooses to make money from lobbying and exploiting his political contacts.

Michael Burrell, managing director of Westminster Strategy, a political consultancy firm, said: "His political career is far from over if he keeps his head down. But he must avoid all kinds of outside consultancy work."

Mr Mandelson's dilemma is that money clearly matters to him. After a cut in salary from £106,716 to £45,066, he needs extra earnings to finance a lifestyle among London's social elite. He also has the matter of repayment of the £373,000 loan that triggered his political fall. City head-

## THE FUTURE

hunters said that despite the circumstances of his downfall, Mr Mandelson was a highly marketable commodity with a huge earning potential. One said: "He is definitely someone worth having aboard and that is because he has had a very prime position in politics and in government during the last two years. In public relations and the world of spin there is plenty of potential."

The headhunter said Mr Mandelson would be the ideal figure behind the scenes for someone wishing to set up a hedge fund or financial services business. "He would be looking at pay of £1 million a year but any entrepreneur or risk-taking businessman would be willing to pay that amount for someone with his skills. They would be running a risk but so would he."

He said he could imagine Mr Mandelson in an enterprise such as Richard Branson's but working behind the scenes. Established firms such as the major clearing banks, however, would be unlikely to employ the

former minister because it would not fit his image. "You are paying him £1 million because in a sense he was almost No 2 in the Government. Despite what has happened, a lot of people rather like him."

If Mr Mandelson were to settle for something less ambitious, he could combine journalism with a job as a consultant for a number of companies. He could earn £70,000 a year for a newspaper column and a consultancy with a major firm could add at least £40,000 annually.

But in the world of lobbying Mr Mandelson would have difficulty finding employment. The key lobbying groups at Westminster are barred by their own code of conduct from employing MPs.

Most believed that Mr Mandelson's longer-term ambition to return to the top ranks of government will stop him seeking employment in consultancy work. Companies would be willing to pay a high salary for his political judgment "but if Mr Mandelson takes that course his credibility will decline", one public affairs consultant said.



The constituents' view: Mr Ash and Mr Legg support their MP; Miss Storm is not a fan



# Tories seek answers on extent of gifts

Critics claim Geoffrey Robinson's generosity enabled him to survive earlier scandals. James Landale reports

HE LENT money to Peter Mandelson, funded Gordon Brown's research, gave football tickets to MPs and let Tony Blair holiday at his Tuscan villa. Geoffrey Robinson was as much new Labour's Paymaster General as he was the Government's and his resignation prompted fresh questions from the Tories about the extent of his largesse. Downing Street insisted that Mr Robinson, 60, had assured them that there were "no outstanding loans" to any MP other than Mr Mandelson. But officials were unable to rule out the possibility of loans made and repaid in the past and MPs were last night asking what secrets the millionaire businessman and archetypal champagne socialist might be taking to the backbenches. Peter Lilley, the deputy Tory leader, said: "We now need clear assurances that no other minister has received any kind of financial support from Geoffrey Robinson or owe him any obligations for any support he has given them. The Government have so far failed to do so. If they can't, we need a full and impartial investigation."

Robinson was educated at Emanuel School in London, and Cambridge and Yale universities. A natural financial whizz-kid, Mr Robinson rose swiftly and became chief executive of Jaguar at the age of 33. With the help of a loan from a mysterious Belgian businessman, Joska Bourgeois, he set up an engineering firm, Trans-Tec, which is now the main source of his £30 million fortune. In 1967, he married Marie-Elena, a flamboyant Italian opera singer who opposed his entry into politics. After a brief and unsatisfying period as a very junior Opposition frontbencher under Neil Kinnock in the mid-1980s, it was the arrival of Tony Blair which led to his political renaissance. To the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Robinson offered two things: business expertise and advice, and an ability to woo businessmen to New Labour's cause. He also provided hard cash for a hard-up Opposition. Most importantly, he funded the Smith Political Economy Unit, set up after John Smith's death, which advised Gordon Brown on the windfall tax. Mr Robinson's largesse has also been personal. He is as generous as he is charming. Gordon Brown has stayed at his Tuscan villa, and the Chancellor's aides have enjoyed beer, pizza and TV football in his Park Lane penthouse. Labour MPs have been given free tickets for Coventry City Football Club, a large chunk of which is owned by Mr Robinson. But while the Paymaster General's wealth provided op-

portunities for Labour, it also introduced a key flaw. Almost from his first day, the Tories sensed a weakness in Mr Robinson. They saw a businessman with poor political antennae who might have skeletons in his closet. Within months, the minister in charge of cutting tax avoidance was found to have off-shore trusts. He was criticised for not declaring directorships in the register of MPs' interests. He faces a DTI investigation into allegations of breaches of company law. He was criticised for his links with Robert Maxwell, the discredited media tycoon. The slow drip of accusations almost forced the Prime Minister to sack Mr Robinson in last July's reshuffle. But Mr Blair's hand was stayed at the last minute by the Chancellor who was unable to countenance such a loss to his powerbase. However, Mr Robinson became increasingly invisible in Parliament as his official duties were scaled down. Although nominally in charge of corporation tax, other Treasury ministers have dealt with the issue in the Commons. Although Mr Robinson helped to set up the Individual Savings Accounts tax-free replacement to Peps, Patricia Hewitt, the Economic Secretary, has taken charge of the portfolio. Throughout the last six months, the Tory attacks continued unabated and support for Mr Robinson both in Government and on the backbenches began to slip away. Such was his distance from the Government that the Prime Minister's official spokesman was yesterday forced to say that Mr Robinson "was not a leper". But resignation yesterday was no surprise. He had been expected to go in the new year. The Mandelson affair simply brought the timing forward.

### THE CAREER

ity to woo businessmen to New Labour's cause. He also provided hard cash for a hard-up Opposition. Most importantly, he funded the Smith Political Economy Unit, set up after John Smith's death, which advised Gordon Brown on the windfall tax. Mr Robinson's largesse has also been personal. He is as generous as he is charming. Gordon Brown has stayed at his Tuscan villa, and the Chancellor's aides have enjoyed beer, pizza and TV football in his Park Lane penthouse. Labour MPs have been given free tickets for Coventry City Football Club, a large chunk of which is owned by Mr Robinson. But while the Paymaster General's wealth provided op-



Conflicting passions: Geoffrey Robinson and his wife Marie Elena at the wedding of a Labour MP

# Doorstep diva beats No 10 with news

THE WIFE BY JAMES LANDALE

MARIE ELENA ROBINSON did not want her husband to enter politics and yesterday his departure from Government could not come soon enough. The red-headed opera-singing wife of the Paymaster General disclosed his resignation from the door of their mansion more than an hour before the official announcement. Asked at lunchtime about the content of the statement expected from Mr Robinson, his Italian-born wife said: "Well, he has resigned. He has resigned together with Peter Mandelson. This is what I gather, anyway." Downing Street did not confirm his resignation until after 3pm. Mrs Robinson, 58, told reporters: "I don't know how I feel about it at the moment since I'm in no power to do anything. You accept it one way or the other, don't you." Her reaction to the news was phlegmatic to the last: "It's sunny when it's sunny, it's rainy when it's rainy. As for plans for the future, we'll be spending Christmas as we always do, here at the house. I can't make any further comment." Never an enthusiast for politics and the demands of being an MP's wife, Mrs Robinson once said: "We both have strong personalities. My career is music, his is politics. I am just not interested in politics. I don't think I should follow [Geoffrey] like a little dog." Mr Robinson's resignation after more than a year of criticism from the Tories will clearly come as a relief to Mrs Robinson. She will be keen to see more of him at their Lutyns mansion near Godalming, Surrey. Their two grown-up children, Margot Veronique and Alexander, will also be happy to have more of his time. The 31-year marriage has on occasion been stormy. Last month he disclosed that she threw alarm clocks at him when she lost her temper. Mr Robinson faced accusations earlier this year from an Italian actress who alleged that he had once been her lover. The accusations were categorically denied. The Robinsons are clearly still a couple in love. He recently hired an orchestra to help to record a compact disc of his wife singing. "She feels herself most fulfilled in her singing and I do everything I can to promote that," he said. In a recent interview, he said: "I adore her." For her part, Mrs Robinson looked the model of a proud wife earlier this year when she wore a tightfitting gold trouser suit and black choker at the wedding of the Labour MP Yvette Cooper and Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's aide.

# Mystery of Maxwell links

By CHRIS AYRES

THE resignation of Geoffrey Robinson as Paymaster General will not end the allegations of financial sleaze that have cast a shadow over the Government. Aside from the subject of Mr Robinson's loan to Peter Mandelson, there is still much concern over the Coventry North West MP's business dealings with Robert Maxwell, the media tycoon whose employees found an estimated £450 million missing from their pension funds. Mr Robinson is not the only member of the Government who has links to Robert Maxwell. Helen Liddell, the Scottish Education Minister, Lord Donoghue, Minister for Agriculture in the Lords, and Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's chief press secretary, have connections to companies once owned by Mr Maxwell. Ms Liddell, a former BBC journalist, was public affairs director of Mr Maxwell's Scottish Daily Record in the late 1980s. She was once described as "Maxwell's eyes and ears in Scotland", and was well known for her support for the tycoon.

### MEDIA INTERESTS

Mr Campbell was also very close to Mr Maxwell as political editor of *The Mirror*. Lord Donoghue was vice-chairman of London & Bishopsgate International, a company that handled pension funds for Mr Maxwell worth an estimated £70 million. One former employee of Mr Maxwell described Lord Donoghue as "Mr Maxwell's financial Mr Fix-it". The relationships between Ms Liddell, Lord Donoghue and Mr Campbell with Mr Maxwell are due to be exposed when the Department of Trade and Industry publishes its investigation into the disastrous 1991 flotation on the London Stock Exchange of Mirror Group Newspapers. It has been rumoured that the report has been delayed for political reasons, although this has been strenuously denied. The reluctance of Kevin Maxwell, Mr Maxwell's son, to give evidence, has also set back the report's publication. Although Mr Robinson was not involved in the *Mirror* Group flotation, his

troubles are far from over. The multi-millionaire MP is still understood to be the subject of a DTI investigation, after allegations that he breached company law several times when a director of Hollis Industries, the engineering part of Robert Maxwell's business empire. The allegations mainly involve the failure of Hollis to keep proper financial records. Mr Robinson has admitted that a £200,000 payment to him recorded in the accounts of Hollis Industries had never been made. In the same accounts, the company's auditors severely criticise the company for failing to keep accurate records. If the DTI finds Mr Robinson guilty, he could be disqualified as a company director, fined, or even sent to prison. However, the latter case is highly unlikely. Mr Robinson faces several other serious accusations, in particular his apparent failure to disclose to Parliament his directorships of companies linked to Mr Maxwell. The true extent of Mr Robinson's wealth is still not known, in particular how much money he has in his off-shore trust.

# 'He cares. He is not dishonest. He is a victim of his success'

### CONSTITUENCY

By PETER FOSTER

WHATEVER enemies Geoffrey Robinson may have made during his short spell as a minister, he retains many loyal friends in the Coventry North West constituency he has served as an MP for more than 20 years. A regular supporter of the local Premiership football team and the man credited by some with keeping the Jaguar car factory in Coventry, Mr Robinson has built up a reputation for loyalty to a city whose manufacturing base suffered deep cuts in the last two recessions. Yesterday afternoon his supporters reacted angrily to a resignation which they blamed on a steady "drip-drip" of unfounded rumour and innuendo propagated by the Conservative party in Westminster. Margaret Lancaster, the constituency secretary since 1976 and his agent at the last three elections, said her boss had fallen victim of an unending witch-hunt: "He has been pursued relentlessly, and I have puzzled myself to think why. "It is probably because he is



Geoffrey Robinson celebrates his election in 1976.

so wealthy and the Tories are jealous. He is not a dishonest man and cares about the Labour Party. No one produces any evidence, but the whole thing has rumbled on for more than a year. He is a victim of his own success, but he will still be our MP and I have no doubt he will resurface." Mr Robinson has not had an untroubled career as a local MP, accused by some of being more interested in his business operations. In 1989, he fought a tight reselection battle after allegedly failing to

make enough Commons speeches. However the sense that Mr Robinson had been unfairly hounded was also picked up by Nick Nolan, chair of Coventry City Council's economic regeneration committee, who has worked with Mr Robinson for almost 20 years. Mr Nolan cited the recent row in the press over Mr Robinson's role in supporting Coventry City Football Club's plans to build a £150 million stadium in the constituency. Newspapers claimed that Mr Robinson, whose offshore Orion Trust owns 40 per cent of the club, had lobbied Government on behalf of the project without declaring his interest in it. "The whole thing was blown out of all proportion," Mr Nolan said. "Geoffrey Robinson wrote to the planning minister along with all of the other local MPs to try and push the project along in time for the next World Cup. He received a standard reply like and is accused to trying to further his interests. You just can't win." His two fellow Coventry MPs, Bob Ainsworth (Coventry North East) and Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) were supportive of a man who they said had done much to help attract foreign investment. Mr Ainsworth said: "There is a real sadness and not a little anger." Mr Cunningham said that Mr Robinson had not forgotten his local responsibilities despite his ministerial duties: "I've had people approach me on the streets today saying he should not have resigned." The Rev Patrick Kilgarriff, 57, a constituent, said: "Geoffrey Robinson has had people out to get him from the very beginning. I fully support him."

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THE TIMES THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 1995

Aristocracy is testing ground for fruit-fly theory

A trade-off appears to exist between longevity and reproduction, say scientists. Nigel Hawkes reports

THE British aristocracy lives and dies by the same evolutionary rules as the humble fruit-fly, a study has found. After scanning more than 1,000 years of births, marriages and deaths among royal houses and the peerage...

makes a perfect database for testing the theory. Their lives are well-documented and they are insulated from the social deprivation that curtails the lives of commoner folk...

ranging from the Dukés and Earls of Abercorn to the Barons of Willoughby de Broke. In Nature the two report that the women who had the fewest children tended to live the longest...



The fruit-fly theory proved

NET LINKS

http://og1.scs.man.ac.uk/APE/JCE.html Manchester University ageing project website provides background information on the research programme in general.

cratic database seems to show that it does. Almost half the women who lived beyond the age of 81 were childless...

genes would be expected to show up more strongly, the effect is particularly clear. After 1700, when aristocrats began to enjoy longer lives, the effect is less obvious but still significant.

that says is something very important about the genetic architecture of the ageing process. It doesn't mean it's something that is open to an individual to manipulate.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bridgewater police to face no charges

Ten police officers involved in the Bridgewater Four case will not face charges over allegations of fabricating evidence. The Crown Prosecution Service said that there would be no realistic prospect of securing convictions.

Island crash

Three British residents of Cyprus were killed yesterday when their car hit a tree in Limassol. Police identified them as Walter Stella, 51, Frank Jones, 53, and Judith Jones, 50.

Vigilante grans

Two Birmingham grandmothers, Doris Ray, 84, and Edith Basham, 69, who tied up a burglar with a handbag strap, have each been awarded £100 by a judge for their citizen's arrest.

BA lifts ban

British Airways has lifted its nine-year flight ban on Salman Rushdie. The Iranian Government announced in September that it would not seek to carry out the death sentence imposed on him in 1989 for The Satanic Verses.

Hair razing

Matthew Sisson, 14, has been suspended from Trinity School, Aspley, Nottingham, for wearing a shaved head after a boy had his hair burnt in a science lesson.

Cost of indulgence

Christmas hangovers and over-eating cost businesses £78 million in days off, according to a survey by Norwich Union Healthcare. One in 25 employees takes sick leave around Christmas because of over-indulgence, it says.

CORRECTION

Mr and Mrs William Mackenzie will not be required to leave their home, leased from the Church Commissioners, on Christmas Day, contrary to a report of December 4. Although the lease expires on December 25, arrangements for vacation of the property will only be made after that date.

Rapist is put under curfew for eight years

By RUSSELL JENKINS

A RAPIST who attacked students as they slept was yesterday placed under a night-time curfew for eight years.

The ruling, made by a stipendiary magistrate in Manchester, is the first of its kind to come before the courts under powers contained in the Crime and Disorder Act, which came into force this month.

Michael Gordon, 35, who served seven years of a twelve-year jail sentence for raping two students, was spotted prowling around the same Rusholme area of south Manchester with his shoes off, peering into bedroom windows.

The police authority applied to a stipendiary magistrate in Manchester for a Sex Offenders Order barring Gordon from entering a large area covering south Manchester's student bedsit land at night.

Mr Berg told the court: "I have no hesitation in concluding an order is necessary to protect the public from serious harm. It is this very type of behaviour and these circumstances for which this timely legislation was brought into being."

Wayne Jackson, counsel for Gordon, had complained to the court that the order was draconian. He said he planned to lodge an immediate appeal.

Leslie Hull, counsel for the police, told the court that Gordon was imprisoned in 1990 for two serious rapes in 1987 and 1988. He would target his victim, break into the house and confront her while she was in a deep sleep.

Gordon was released from prison on licence last year and has been living in council accommodation in Rusholme since he left a probation hostel in March.

He was tracked by officers in the early hours of December 8 - eight days after the Act became law - as he crept around houses in the district around the university. He was seen peering, hands cupped around his eyes, into five houses. When arrested, he was running on tiptoe with his shoes in his hand.

Mr Hull said that his behaviour showed chilling echoes of his previous offences "giving reasonable cause to believe that an order is necessary to protect the public from serious harm."

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Gordon: has been barred from university grounds



Timings of comfort and joy: choristers at Westminster Cathedral rehearsing yesterday as they prepare for the Midnight Mass tonight

Research base turkey gets stuck in the ice

By NICK NUTTALL

THE most southerly British settlement in the world is facing a bleak Christmas Day. The supply ship for the Halley research station in Antarctica, the first in ten months, is held up by ice 70 miles away.

dried and tinned supplies to last them until February, they are low on the little extras that ensure festive spirit. "Beer stocks are running a bit low but I think we have enough to see in the new year."

Supplies on board the ship include turkey that has been boned so that diseases that could be harboured in the bones cannot enter the pristine wilderness.

On the Bransfield, the 80 crew, replacement researchers and workmen are determined to make it in time. Linda Copper, a spokeswoman for the survey who is on board, said: "We are making a couple of hundred mince pies as I speak."

Branson plans party balloon

By HELEN RUMBELLOW

CHRISTMAS inside Richard Branson's balloon capsule could be high-spirited but frugal, with homemade crackers and boil-in-the-bag turkey. In the rush to launch, the crew of the ICO Global Challenger forgot to pack the festive hats and pudding.

carefully balanced diet in favour of chocolate and comfort food after crossing the Gulf war zone and China. On leaving Japan last night they had travelled about 6,500 miles, almost halfway to the distance record set by Mr Fossett.

Pinochet banned from going to Midnight Mass

By MICHAEL HOBSNELL

A ROMAN Catholic bishop last night expressed his regret that General Augusto Pinochet had been refused permission to attend Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

If a request is made, a local priest will attend the former Chilean dictator at the house he is renting in Surrey to administer Holy Communion after talking confession.

The Right Rev Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, which covers the Westworth Estate where the general is under police guard, spoke after Bow Street magistrates in London were told that bail conditions would not be changed to allow a visit to church.

The bishop said: "There is an expectation that all Catholics will make every effort to attend Mass on Sundays and special feast days. It is a matter of regret that there are those, including General Pinochet, who are unable to attend Mass this Christmas. It is my responsibility to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is given to all who need it."

CONSUL THREATS

The British consul in the Chilean port city of Valparaiso has threatened to expel General Pinochet if he does not accept a local priest will attend the former Chilean dictator at the house he is renting in Surrey to administer Holy Communion after talking confession.

ble, Graham Parkinson, chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate, said it would be better for a private religious service to be held. He told Mr Caplan: "I would not have agreed to him going to church. It has got to come to him."

Midlands bears the brunt of flu outbreak

By IAN MURRAY

INFLUENZA is on the increase, with two of the three different strains of the virus being reported across the country. Although the latest known level of 50 cases per 100,000 is normal for the time of year, figures published today are expected to show a big increase, especially in the Midlands.

Strains of A and B influenza virus have been identified. The A type, which causes the more debilitating symptoms, is similar to one which is known as Sydney flu and is covered by the latest vaccine. Type B has yet to be identified.

In most cases the illness clears up within seven to ten days, although in severe forms it can cause pneumonia.

The figures, from the Royal College of General Practitioners' monitoring unit in Birmingham, are not expected to show the number of cases to be anywhere nearly as high as in 1995 and 1996 when there were more than 200 reported cases per 100,000.

Prince ponders medicinal value of cannabis

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Prince of Wales has expressed an interest in the effectiveness of cannabis in relieving the pain of diseases such as multiple sclerosis.

Next month the Multiple Sclerosis Society will publish a protocol worked out with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society on how clinical trials on cannabis and its derivatives should be conducted.

The society believes that trials are essential to find out whether cannabis has dangerous long-term effects and believes that only neurologists should be allowed to prescribe the drug.

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BOXING DAY IN THE SATURDAY TIMES



SAD BRITANNIA How Britpop lost out to hip-hop



THE SALES Guide to the best bargains in your area ONLY 50p

Officers angered by bonus for inmates

By PAUL WILKINSON

PRISON officers are complaining that they have missed out on a Christmas bonus while inmates at their jail received a festive £5. Colin McConnell, the Governor at Full Sutton, a top-security prison outside York, gave £5 to each of the inmates to help with cards, letters or telephone calls to families over the holiday. Yesterday Stan Walpole, of the Prison Officers' Association at the jail, said staff were angry not to have had a seasonal bonus. "We are still wrangling with authorities over pay and conditions," he said. "The thing is, prisoners will get used to it and it becomes the norm." He said that governors would "leave us to pick up the pieces if this does not now become a regular thing". The Prison Service said the money came from a fund generated from inmates' pay for work in jail. A spokeswoman said it was "a very small sum; it helps to keep them in touch with their families and friends at a difficult time of the year". It applied only to Full Sutton.



Michelle Williamson chained herself to the Maze exit so that Kelly could not miss her

IRA's Shankill bomber 'skulks' home from jail

Mass murderer avoids victims' daughter as terrorists take a holiday. Martin Fletcher reports

THERE was intense anger among Unionists yesterday when the Government not only allowed 170 hardcore terrorist prisoners home for Christmas but also helped one of Northern Ireland's most infamous mass murderers to avoid the daughter of two of his victims. The Maze prison authorities smuggled Sean Kelly out of a side exit so that he would not have to face Michelle Williamson, who had handcuffed herself to the main turnstile early in the morning and was waiting to hand him a letter. "Kelly is an even bigger murdering coward than I thought

he was," said Miss Williamson, whose parents, George and Gillian, were among nine people killed in the 1993 IRA bombing of a fish shop in Shankill Road. Kelly is serving nine life sentences. The 31-year-old civil servant was so traumatised by the attack that she has not worked since. She spent nine hours composing the letter, telling Kelly how she had "suffered five years of hell because of you" and promised to "haunt you for the rest of your life". Jeffrey Donaldson, the Ulster Unionist MP, and Ian Paisley Jr, the Democratic Unionist Party's justice spokesman, both called the Government's accommodation of Kelly "outrageous" and demanded an explanation from Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary. Mr Donaldson said Kelly's conduct typified his cowardice. "Just as he skulked up the Shankill Road and planted a bomb that murdered nine innocent people, so he skulked out of the side entrance of the Maze prison." Mr Paisley said Miss Williamson's protest had succeeded because she had "challenged a multiple murderer and he ran away". A Northern Ireland Prison Service spokesman said Kelly had been released through a side exit because "it was considered to be in the best interests of all concerned. The Government had to make sure there was no disorder in the public car park."



Kelly: has served five years of a life sentence

Kelly was not only the multiple killer given ten days Christmas leave. All morning, convicted bombers and gunmen — republican and loyalist — streamed out of the top security jail. At 10.30am Michael Stone went through the turnstile wearing a denim jacket and jeans, his long, greying hair tied back in a ponytail. Stone killed three mourners in his

gun and grenade attack during the Milltown cemetery funerals of the IRA team shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar in 1988. Forty minutes later Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair, commander of the ruthless Ulster Freedom Fighters, went out in a red, white and blue jacket with a baseball cap bearing the legend "Just Do It" pulled down over his face. Before his imprisonment in 1995 Adair masterminded a three-year campaign of terror in which more than 20 innocent Roman Catholics were murdered. Next out was the IRA's Patrick Magee, who came within an ace of killing Margaret Thatcher and her cabinet in the 1984 Brighton bombing. In the Irish Republic 30 terrorists, including the four-man Balcombe Street gang, which terrorised London in the mid-1970s, were simultaneously released for Christmas.

The Prison Service claims the Christmas leave scheme helps inmates to maintain family links and reduces the chances of them re-offending when released. It normally applies only to those who have served ten years or are in the final two years of their sentences but was extended this year to all those due to be released under the Good Friday accord. Dr Mowlam said she accepted the early releases were a "bitter pill to swallow" but argued that they were an integral part of the accord which offered the best chance of securing a peaceful future.

LETTER TO A KILLER

To Prisoner Kelly who murdered my mother and father in cold blood. Without giving them a chance, and without remorse, you deliberately planned, schemed and executed your plan without mercy. What did they do to you? My mother and father were not members of any organisation or political group. They were just normal people doing normal things on a Saturday morning. What gave you the right to take away their lives? I have suffered five years of hell because of you — but now it's your turn. You will have to live with it for the rest of your life. I will never forgive you or let you forget. Every year on October 23, I will remind you of what you have done — I will haunt you for the rest of your life. When you are in the pub tonight... laughing at me and my letter, every time you mention my name or hear my name, you will remember what you have done. You are like a disease in my bones and the only cure is justice. To say I hate you does not begin to describe how I feel about you. I intend to do all that I can to keep you behind bars where you belong. So go ahead and have your drink — I hope you choke on it, for you are nothing but a murdering coward. I hope — no, I know, you will rot in hell. Merry Christmas, from Michelle Williamson.

Advertisement for BT phone cards. Features a large image of a 50p phone card with a turkey illustration. Text includes: "...the twins want to sing 'Silent Night' for you...", "...I'll go and get Mum...", "...what do you mean you're not having turkey?", "...no Vicky's down south, but John's here...", "...just a mo, Susie's somewhere...", "...I'll go and wake up your Dad...", "...I'm hanging you over to Uncle Peter...", "...your brother's here, wish him Happy Chrismo...", "...Uncle Vic wants a word...", "...I'll drag Aunt Em away from the washing up...", "...little Sean wants to tell you about his new bike...", "...say hello to your cousin Sal...", "...hang on, Gran's coming to the phone..."

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Victimised policeman awarded £23,000

By STEWART TENDLER CRIME CORRESPONDENT A POLICE sergeant who claimed he was victimised by a woman officer has won more than £23,000 damages from Hertfordshire police at an employment tribunal. Sergeant Jon France claimed he was transferred by Chief Inspector Elizabeth Byron because the force knew he was about to launch a case against it and it would not have been able to move him once proceedings had begun. The tribunal was told Sergeant France, 47, was the manager of a small unit at Hertford employing women civilian staff, he specialised in liquor licensing. He had become involved in a dispute with one of his female staff and three days after meeting Chief Inspector Byron, the new divisional commander, was transferred to become a custody sergeant. He said he felt "humiliated and frustrated" and began to lose self-confidence until he started to take time off sick with depression. In its decision the tribunal ruled the transfer was against the rules of the force and its policy on equal opportunities.

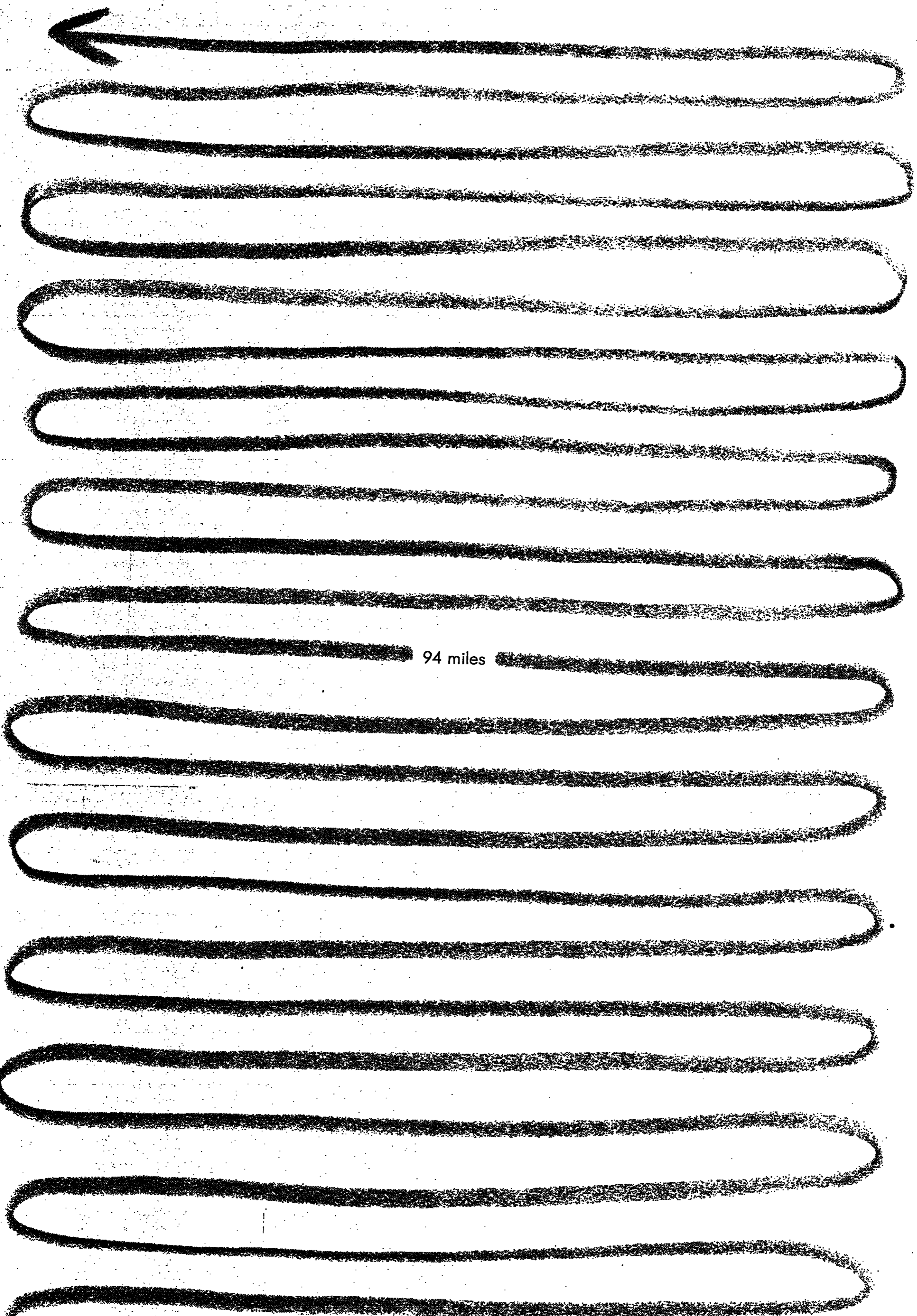
Makeshift bobsleigh hurtles into shop

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS FIVE British revellers are in hospital in France after their late-night descent of a ski slope on foam padding ended in a shop window. One broke his back and another cracked a bone in her pelvis. Both will make a full recovery, according to the hospital in Moutiers in the French Alps. The other three had cuts and bruises. A sixth reveller escaped unhurt. A French state prosecutor is launching an inquiry that may lead to a heavy fine for the British party, who attempted to toboggan on one of the sheets of padding protecting the pylons supporting the ski lift in the popular resort of La Plagne. According to the local tourist office, the six British holiday-makers dragged their makeshift bobsleigh 500m up a slope and shoved themselves off like an Olympic team. They got away with it once but when they tried to repeat the performance they veered off course and hit the glass front of a sports shop situated at the end of the slope at about 1.30am yesterday. "What they did was extremely dangerous," the tourist office said.

Fragmentary text from the right edge of the page, including "THE TIMES", "Simon Gre", "has discover", "Jones are", "easy targets", "Christmas", "Simon Gre", "has discover", "Nothing quite", "you for being", "Years spent", "one reporter", "erics and court", "cases", "to other people", "we had not", "hardened", "to impact when", "I be", "him.", "We have lived in", "one in a quiet cul-de", "mail Hertfordshire", "most 30 years. The", "can only one robber", "be before. That was", "ear, again at the home", "y who later started", "out", "Neighborhood Watch", "set", "With our double", "multi-point locks, fern", "back gardens and", "wareness, we had", "our home was a tortu", "as before we were", "indefensible as a tent", "brownies camping on", "lead Heath.", "We have never be", "ard at this time of", "ore," one policeman", "They must be stockin", "Christmas.", "We set off fairly", "with only my wife's", "ox and my son's E", "collection stolen. H", "many burglars find", "rucksacks, including", "It seemed ironic th", "could pick our house", "back I was at home", "fig." "Let's pop out for



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\*Total average consumption according to directive 93/116 EC.



# Republican who hounded Clinton accused over sex and cash



Burton: paid staffer to do twin jobs

ONE of President Clinton's harshest Republican critics in Congress was embroiled in new controversy yesterday over allegations of sexual harassment and paying a woman on his staff to do two jobs.

## Another wrangle over moral values has stirred Capitol Hill, writes Ian Brodie

had been forced to admit that he had fathered a son during an extramarital affair. Earlier he had called Mr Clinton a "scumbag", for which he subsequently apologised.

Congress must ensure that none of the money paid to them by the Government for their official duties goes to subsidise their campaigns.

for the two jobs over the past nine years often covered the same periods of time. The newspaper also reported that the Burton campaign paid Ms Keller monthly rent to have his campaign headquarters in her home. Further, her daughter, ex-husband, sister and aunt were all said to be on the campaign payroll.

hands up my skirt so fast I didn't even know what was coming," she said. The *Salon* account detailed other episodes of alleged harassment dating back to his days in the state legislature in Indiana when he was an insurance salesman and estate agent.

In a statement yesterday, Mr Burton's office described *Salon* as "well-known for its close ties to the White House". In an appeal for funds on his Website, Mr Burton complains that the Administration and liberal news media have "dispatched their goons" to discredit him.

## Octuplet family is flooded with gifts

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN NEW YORK

LYKE Louis Udobi, proud father of the world's only known octuplets, can relax for the first time in days: he and his wife, Nkem Chukwu, have been promised free tyres and engine oil for life. Since the birth of their children on Sunday, supplies, support and money have poured in.

The babies remained in critical but stable condition, though the chances of survival for the smallest, Baby E, were downgraded from 85 per cent to between 20 and 65 per cent after she was found to have a minor heart problem.

# Bribery court seals disgrace of Nato ex-chief

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

A BRUSSELS court yesterday brought down the curtain on Belgium's longest-running political scandal by passing bribery convictions against Willy Claes, the former chief of Nato, ten other political figures and Serge Dassault, the boss of the French aerospace firm.



Claes yesterday: guilty of taking kickbacks

A special court of 15 judges sentenced the men, most of them senior figures in Belgium's two Socialist parties, to suspended terms of up to five years for their parts in twin cases involving £3 million of kickbacks for government aviation contracts to Dassault and Agusta, the Italian helicopter makers. The three-year sentence against Mr Claes, 60, sealed the disgrace of one of Belgium's most internationally successful politicians.

sonal enrichment, the trial revealed the unexplained presence of a deposit of £20,000 on Mr Claes's personal bank account. The sentence of two years against M Dassault, 73, one of Europe's most powerful industrialists, sparked indignation in the French business world, which has fallen foul of Belgian prosecutors in half a dozen cases. In their verdict, the judges accused M Dassault of lying when he denied the existence of a "corrupting

paid" M Dassault, son of Marcel, founder of the company that created the Mirage family of fighters, is alleged to have told prosecutors that "everyone pays commissions" when military contracts are awarded. M Dassault flew in daily aboard his private jet for sessions of the trial.

Also sentenced yesterday were Guy Spitaels, former leader of the French-speaking Socialist Party, and Guy Coen, who was Defence Minister at the time of the alleged bribes. There is no appeal against sentences from Belgium's special high court.

The three-month trial, which exposed a web of illicit finances in the dominant Walloon and Flemish Socialist parties, crowned a campaign by prosecutors to unearth a chain of scandals that came to light with the murder in 1991 of Andre Cools, a senior Socialist politician.

The case contributed to the aura of corruption which has discredited the country's political elite, along with bungling by the police in the 1996 child murder affair centred on Marc Dutroux.



Riot police crash to the ground as their ladder collapses during the temple assault

## Police in Seoul rout rebel monks

BY DAVID WATTS ASIA EDITOR

DISSIDENT South Korean monks were evicted from the country's leading monastery yesterday after a pitched battle with riot police.

The monks hurled stones, bottles of Coke, firebombs and furniture in their fight to repel officials and police who scaled the building to force them to end a month-long occupation in protest against their leader. Two policemen were seen falling off the building after their ladders crashed to the ground. They were taken to hospital with serious injuries.

One monk slashed his stomach and another doused himself with petrol and threatened to commit suicide by setting himself on fire.

The dissidents had been occupying the monastery since early last month in protest against the conservative leader of the 1,000-year-old Chogye order, the Venerable Song Wol Ju.

He had announced his intention of running for an unprecedented third term as head of the order which carries with it enormous powers of patronage over 1,700 appointments and millions of dollars worth of property.

Last night the Venerable Song announced that he would not seek re-election.

# Hezbollah

Netanyahu vows warring attacked writes Ross Dunn

LEAST 100 people were wounded yesterday as Hezbollah guerrillas launched an assault on Israeli troops in the north. The Israeli army fired back with tear gas and live ammunition. The Hezbollah guerrillas, who are based in Lebanon, are fighting a war against Israel. The attack was part of a series of operations aimed at driving Israeli troops out of Lebanon. The Israeli army has been accused of human rights abuses in Lebanon. The Hezbollah guerrillas have been accused of terrorism. The conflict has caused a large number of deaths and injuries. The situation is very tense. Both sides claim to be the legitimate representatives of the people. The international community is calling for a ceasefire. The UN has been unable to mediate a resolution. The conflict continues to escalate. The Israeli army has launched a major offensive. The Hezbollah guerrillas have retreated. The Israeli army has captured several weapons caches. The Hezbollah guerrillas have vowed to continue their fight. The Israeli army has announced that it will not withdraw from Lebanon. The Hezbollah guerrillas have announced that they will not accept a ceasefire. The conflict is expected to continue for some time. The situation remains very volatile. The Israeli army has launched another offensive. The Hezbollah guerrillas have launched a counter-offensive. The Israeli army has captured several more weapons caches. The Hezbollah guerrillas have vowed to continue their fight. The Israeli army has announced that it will not withdraw from Lebanon. The Hezbollah guerrillas have announced that they will not accept a ceasefire. The conflict is expected to continue for some time. The situation remains very volatile.

LEBANON

ISRAEL

Chateaux fine wine

RENCH wine producers yesterday accused of causing a pollution scandal that has contaminated some of the country's most prestigious bottles. Traces of insecticides were detected in such celebrated wines as Chateau d'Audon, despite a claim from producers that they have used polluted vintages. According to L'Express, the pesticide came from treated wood that was used to refit the cellars and stores of chateaux across Bordeaux and her grape-growing regions. The chemical saturated the mophere in the cellars, poisoning oak barrels and the wine they contained, and causing a reaction that gave a taste of mildew or dark cardboard bottles that can cost several hundred francs. A committee representing regional producers, the Conseil Interprofessionnel du Vin de Bordeaux (CIVB), told the magazine that up to 10 per

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# Hezbollah rockets rain on Israel

### Netanyahu vows vengeance after touring attacked border town, writes Ross Dunn in Jerusalem

AT LEAST 16 Israelis were wounded yesterday when Hezbollah guerrillas launched Katyusha rocket attacks on Israeli towns near the northern border with Lebanon.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, vowed to respond. "We cannot remain silent. We will respond in our own time and according to our own considerations," he said as he toured Kiryat Shmona, one of the towns attacked by nearly three dozen rockets.

The bombardments were in revenge for the deaths of a Lebanese mother and her six children during an Israeli air raid on southern Lebanon on Wednesday.

Tens of thousands of people in northern Israel were ordered to stay in bomb shelters overnight because of the fear of more raids by Hezbollah (Party of God).

The attacks were launched a few hours before the militant Hamas Islamic leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was freed from house arrest. But he immediately vowed to continue a holy war against Israel. Sheikh Yassin, the spiritual founder of the Palestinian Hamas movement, vowed to maintain his group's "pact with God" against Israel.

He was speaking to reporters outside his home in Gaza City, where he had been under detention. "Our pact with God is more important (than the personal freedom of individuals)... We will hold on to our strategy," he said.

The military wing of his organisation has been responsible for killing dozens of Israelis in suicide bombings in recent years and opposes the Oslo peace process. His release was ordered by the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

The Hezbollah leader, Sheikh Mohammed Feneish, said the Katyusha attacks were totally justified. "We can't bear to see the Israeli war machine attack our civilians and our villages without retaliating," he said, rejecting Israeli claims that the killings of the Lebanese civilians were accidental.

Sheikh Feneish said the purpose of the assault was to make Israel respect its undertakings that neither side should target civilians — an understanding reached after the 1996 "Grapes of Wrath" Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Israel's Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, who toured the north of the country yesterday, vowed that his troops would not withdraw from south Lebanon until Hezbollah agreed to end the fighting. One Israeli Cabinet minister called for Israel to knock out power plants in Beirut to force the Lebanese Government to rein in Hezbollah, which is allowed to use the south of the country for military operations. "You can't have a sovereign country that puts its residents into shelters while we sit... helpless and wait for Katyusha rockets," said the Public Security Minister, Avigdor Kahalani.

Hamas, like Hezbollah, believes there will be no peace in the Middle East until the Jewish state is wiped out.

The policy was underlined by Sheikh Yassin, a wheelchair-bound Muslim cleric, who told reporters yesterday that the Wye River land-for-security accord signed in October was a failure. He said his release was a sign that the Palestinian Authority shared his assessment. But the end of his house arrest was seized on by the Israeli Government to claim that the Palestinians were not sincere about fulfilling their obligations under the accord to halt violence by Islamic militants.

In Baalbek, Lebanon, about 5,000 mourners attended the funeral of the Lebanese woman and her children.



An Israeli soldier next to a hole smashed in a child's bedroom wall during yesterday's Hezbollah revenge rocket attack on northern Israel

## WORLD SUMMARY

### Payoff for slave labour

**Hamburg:** The \$12 million (£7 million) fund set up by Volkswagen to compensate its former slave labourers from the Nazi era has made its first payment of \$6,000 each to 17 former slave labourers in Poland and 31 in The Netherlands, the company reported. VW estimates that 17,000 forced labourers worked in its factories from 1941 to the end of the Second World War. Most German firms have refused to meet claims for cash compensation. (AP)

### Rail scare pair held

**Wiesbaden:** Police arrested two men suspected of blackmail after sabotage caused massive disruption to German railways. Wiesbaden's federal crime office said the pair, from former East Germany, were held after an attempt to collect a ransom. (Reuters)

### 21 killed in bus crash

**Laingsburg:** Twenty-one people, including four children, died in an accident near here in South Africa's Western Cape province, when a fertiliser lorry and a bus carrying 80 passengers collided. Seven of the 40 injured were flown to hospital. (AFP)

### Police die in explosion

**Udine:** Three policemen died when a bomb exploded outside a shop in this northeast Italian city. The bombing was thought to be connected to organised crime rather than terrorism. Another policeman and the shop owner were injured. (Reuters)

### Bridge too far for boy

**Oslo:** A Norwegian mother of 14 was jailed for two days for naming a son Ge'acher, the Hebrew word for bridge, in defiance of the Norwegian authorities' list of approved children's names. She had refused to pay a fine. (Reuters)

## Chateaux 'hid pollution in fine wines from public'

FRENCH wine producers were yesterday accused of concealing a pollution scandal that has contaminated some of the country's most prestigious bottles. Traces of insecticide were detected in such celebrated wines as Chateau d'Audoubert, despite a claim from producers that they have banned polluted vintages.

According to *L'Express*, the insecticide came from treated wood that was used to refit the vine cellars and stores of chateaux across Bordeaux and other grape-growing regions. The chemical saturated the atmosphere in the cellars, penetrating oak barrels and the wine they contained, and causing a reaction that gave a taste of mildew or dank cardboard to bottles that can cost several hundred francs.

A committee representing regional producers, the Conseil Interprofessionnel du Vin de Bordeaux (CIVB), told the magazine that up to 10 per cent of Bordeaux vintages from the first half of the decade were contaminated, although yesterday it said the figure was no more than 3 per cent. Yet even this represents 25 million contaminated bottles a year over several years. John Kolassa, who runs Chateau Canon in Saint Emilion, said: "In 1987 the stores were refitted with treated pine and the pollution went like lightning. Several vintages between 1991 and 1995 were seriously affected."

He said the chateau spent £2 million (£200,000) changing all the wood in its stores. Although the product, pentachlorophenol, was banned as dangerous by the European Union in 1991, the French Higher National Public Health Council said the traces found in wine were too small to represent a risk to drinkers. The French wine industry has endeavoured to prevent news of the contamination becoming public.

The problem was first detected in 1982, when the champagne Cristal de Roeder started to smell odd. For almost ten years, as the odour spread to Bordeaux and Burgundy, producers attributed it to their corks, a comfortable explanation that ruffled no feathers. It was only when the smell started to appear in wines in aluminium barrels that scientists were called in.

Yesterday the CIVB admitted failing to alert the public, but said it had "taken all the necessary steps" and was planning to tighten control of Bordeaux wines.

**Chemical caused flavour of dank cardboard, writes Adam Sage**

pentachlorophenol, was banned as dangerous by the European Union in 1991, the French Higher National Public Health Council said the traces found in wine were too small to represent a risk to drinkers. The French wine industry has endeavoured to prevent news of the contamination becoming public.

## Vintage increase in prices

**BOURDEAUX** is facing a crisis because wine producers have priced themselves out of the market, according to merchants (Adam Sage writes).

The Bordeaux chateaux have increased the prices of their most celebrated bottles, sometimes by several hundred per cent. Chateau Margaux, for example, was on sale for Fr155 (£16.50) a bottle in 1994 and Fr500 in 1997. The price of Chateau d'Audoubert rose from Fr80 to Fr220 over the same period.

"We cannot allow ourselves to look like thieves for ever," said Jacques Merliant, head of the wine merchants Yellin. "I have seen speculation before, but nothing like this."

Other merchants say French wine accounted for 37 per cent of wine sales in Britain in 1990, but only 30 per cent last year.

## Phone call by Cook heals rift with Russia on Iraq

**RUSSIA** has agreed to end its diplomatic quarrel with Britain, and will send its Ambassador back to London in the next few days. The decision comes after a telephone call between Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister.

The announcement came as the Americans were preparing a vast reduction in their military capability in the Gulf just four days after ending the bombing campaign. William Cohen, the Defence Secretary, announced that a third of the American forces is being pulled out of the area.

Yuri Fokine, the Russian Ambassador, will return to Britain only about ten days after being recalled to Moscow because of President Yeltsin's anger at British airstrikes on Baghdad.

The move is a clear signal that Moscow does not want to jeopardise otherwise good relations with Britain. Mr Ivanov and Mr Cook also agreed to work closely in the Security Council to find ways to increase humanitarian aid to Iraq. Mr Cook, continuing his telephone blitz of allies, also gained broad support for a new diplomatic initiative from Japan, Spain and Portugal.

America's readiness to pull out 9,000 troops, the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* and dozens of warplanes from the Gulf was announced as Iraq banned all UN flights into the country after the four-day air bombardment. The ban emerged after Iraq refused to allow a UN aircraft to land at Baghdad airport on Wednesday to fly out Frakash Shah, the UN special representative.

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A third of the ground troops will be pulled out along with the B52 and B1 bombers, ten A10 tankbusters and only one carrier, *Carl Vinson*, will stay. The US will keep about 20,000 troops in the region.

While Mr Cohen made his third trip to the Gulf in as many months, the British contingent in Operation Desert Fox was left wondering why no ministers had dropped into Kuwait to see them. Diplomats and military officials had expected Tony Blair to pay a flying visit, but that idea was then mired by diplomatic rows with Kuwait, and Whitehall has not proposed an alternative VIP visitor.

By MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR, AND DANIEL MCGROBY IN KUWAIT CITY

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**NEW ON VIDEO**  
COMING TO VIDEO  
**The Postman**

**THE TIMES**  
**ARTS**



# When in doubt, cut to a chase

**NEW MOVIES: Geoff Brown sees Will Smith tackle dark forces once again in *Enemy of the State***



What's a nice guy like Will Smith doing being pursued by his own country's security forces? A lot of running, as the breathless but entertaining *Enemy of the State* shows

**W**atch out: Robin Williams is out and about, acting winsome, smiling through tears and grinding his teeth with the stress of being touchy-feely. He is doing this in *Heaven too*, a place kitted out like a 19th-century Romantic landscape, with little Greek temples nestled on hills, dazzling waterfalls, sprites flying through the air and masses of autumn leaves. Even the film title, snipped out of "To be or not to be" from *Hamlet*, sounds horribly precocious. Can you take all this in Christmas week?

communications satellites orbiting the globe. All this visual razzmatazz, however, would get pretty tiring if there were no strong actors to anchor the film. Will Smith is no screen Olivier, but he has likeable presence in spades, and the affability of his young lawyer, suddenly de-railed from a successful career, is crucial to the plot.

**O**ther performers rely on tried and true acting skills to make their mark. Jon Voight cuts a chilling figure as the rogue administrator in the NSA, determined to stamp out all opposition to a Bill proposing new agency powers. But it is Gene Hackman, a late arrival in the story, who takes the laurels for his surveillance expert, Brill, a prickly presence with close-cropped grey hair, ugly specs and a frightening bark of a voice.

Matheson would still be difficult to swallow. Williams plays a saintly doctor who dies in a car crash and wanders through the afterlife trying to find his two late children (also car crash victims) and his wife (an eventual suicide). The power of love to overcome death is one of the world's mightiest concepts, whether attached to religious beliefs or not. But these are very personal matters, and it is hard to stop the pathos rising when they are publicly expressed in a film weighed down with romantic kitsch, and where the loftiest philosophical statement is "don't give up".

**Enemy of the State**  
Odeon West End, 15, 128 mins  
Fast-paced conspiracy thriller

**What Dreams May Come**  
Warner West End, 15, 113 mins  
Robin Williams wanders through Heaven

**The Mighty**  
Curzon Soho, PG, 101 mins  
Schmalz avoided in tale of outcast children

**The Apple**  
Reinor, PG, 85 mins  
Fascinating Iranian docudrama

come knockabout touch as Williams's breezy guide through the brave new world of the afterlife. The film-makers, clearly, want us to step out of the cinema in a rosy, transcendental glow. But their labours ultimately result in fancy mush. Does anyone have an indignation tablet?

A plot outline of *The Mighty* suggests another upset stomach is in store. A hulking adolescent in Cincinnati, slow to learn, teams up with a clever lad condemned to crutches by a degenerative disease. One needs a brain, the other feet. So they pool resources, one sitting on the other's shoulders, and lurch into action fighting school bullies, rescuing damsels in distress, imbued with the valorous spirit of the Knights of the Round Table.

**T**his is a recipe for schmalz and cuteness. But a miracle happens. The film is genuinely touching. It also swings between realism and fantasy with uncommon ease, and finds poetry in the most ordinary things, from a dingy winery street to a line of washing.

Sharon Stone takes top billing, but despite her fine performance as a working-class mum, the film definitely belongs to the youngsters, Eiden Heuson and Kieran Culkin as Kevin, known as Freak.

The director is that eccentric British talent, Peter Jackson, whose previous work ballooned with gusto to a danger-

**THE SUNDAY TIMES**  
MAGAZINE  
Moments of madness, magic and Monica: 1998 in pictures

STYLE  
Get down and party with a cool guide to throwing a good bash, plus tips on how to spot a bad one

ARTS & BOOKS  
Why Sharon Stone's reputation is set to change in 1999

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

## The US male must get through

**■ THE POSTMAN**  
Warner DVD, 15, 1997  
WITH the DVD format, a mediocre film can be made more interesting by the addition of extra features. So Kevin Costner's shallow futuristic epic comes with a short tour of the film's special effects. The information and images are presented too fast to be properly digested. This cannot be said of the film itself, which dawdles grandiosely over the tale of Costner, the pretend postman, a symbol of hope in an America wailing under the thumb of a tinpot general after an apocalyptic war. Fatuous, but never downright boring; and British actress Olivia Williams makes a strong impact as the love interest.

**■ RED CORNER**  
MGM, 15, 1997  
IN China to bid for a satellite TV project, Richard Gere's American attorney is found with a dead model beside him. So he's yanked off to the cells for a tough battle with an impenetrable legal system. The initial set-up intrigues, and it's fun trying to work out how the film-makers make their LA locations look like the authentic Beijing. But interest diminishes in time: would you root for someone eager to swamp another part of the world with Baywatch? A rental release.

**■ ANIMATION ON 4 - VOLUME TWO**  
Corinoisseur, 15  
TIRED of flying saucers and other kiddies' cartoons? Then pop this in your Christmas stocking: a collection of seven award-winning cartoons of the 1990s financed by Channel 4, all meant for adult eyes. Phil Mulloy's satire on city living, *The Sound of Music*, is the most obnoxious. For

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INSIDE SECTION 2 TODAY



BUSINESS

How much do you remember about 1998? PAGE 25

BOOKS

Thomas Kenally's saga gets lost in a wide storyscape PAGE 28



SPORT

Prizes on offer in our giant festive crossword PAGE 37

TELEVISION AND RADIO Pages 38, 39

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

THURSDAY DECEMBER 24 1998

Unions to ask Byers to rethink jobs Bill

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY... UNIONS are looking to press the new Trade and Industry Secretary for a better deal on trade union law.

TUC two years ago by telling Byers... Ken Jackson, general secretary of the AEEU, said: "Although I regret he has felt it necessary to resign, I applaud his courage."

ward to working with Stephen Byers... John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB (Mr Mandelson's union), said: "I feel genuine sympathy for Peter. It is a personal tragedy and I feel very sorry for him."

entrepreneurship and competitiveness... The CBI said: "The CBI regrets the departure of a minister who in the time he had been in the post had shown a clear sense of the key requirements for business success and a strong commitment to improving the competitiveness of British business."

currency next month. He faces a sensitive takeover decision on the bid for Manchester United by BSkyB, an associate company of News International, owner of The Times.

Labour's darkest day, page 1... Commentary, page 23

BUSINESS TODAY

Table with financial data: STOCK MARKET INDICES, FTSE 100, US RATE, LONDON MONEY, STERLING.

Hopes of fresh cut in rates boosted by MPC

By ADAM JONES... HOPES for a further cut in interest rates rose yesterday after the minutes of December's Monetary Policy Committee meeting showed that only one member voted against the resultant half-point reduction.



Nick Treas, chief executive of Vardon, which is selling the London Dungeon in the deal

Vardon in £47m sale of Sea Life... By DOMINIC WALSH... VARDON, the leisure group, has sold its London Dungeon and Sea Life Centres attractions division to Apex Partners, the venture capital group, for £47 million.

Sharp gets SFA fine of £200,000... By RICHARD MILES... ALBERT E SHARP, the private client stockbroker, was yesterday fined £200,000 and severely reprimanded by the Securities and Futures Authority for serious failures in its back-office administration.

Piasecki in £48m bid for Goldsmiths

By FRASER NELSON... JUREK PIASECKI, chairman and chief executive of Goldsmiths, is understood to be plotting a bid to take the company private for about £48 million.

Thomas Cook in European union

CONSOLIDATION in the European travel industry yesterday saw Thomas Cook spun into Hapa-Touristik Union, one of its continental rivals, in a deal between their respective German owners, Westdeutsche Landesbank and Preussag.

Icahn takes a fresh crack at RJR



FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK... CARL ICAHN, the legendary American corporate raider, has accumulated a \$500 million (£300 million) stake in RJR Nabisco in an attempt to force the US conglomerate to demerge its tobacco and food businesses.

This time Mr Icahn may have a better chance of convincing shareholders that his strategy will boost the company's depressed share price.

The legal settlement has strengthened Mr Icahn's case. His earlier bid for a demerger had earlier been opposed by the company's lawyers, who

claimed a demerger would be challenged in the context of the settlement. In his filing with the SEC, Mr Icahn said that because a settlement had been reached, the company was free to pursue all options.



Commentary, page 23









# Give it a whirl with helicopter brain

How much did you mind your business in 1998? Now is the chance to find out

They are supposed to be running the country

- The production of which key economic indicator was suspended because it proved unreliable?
  - a) Inflation minus mortgages
  - b) Average earnings
  - c) Retail sales
- Which member of the Monetary Policy Committee predicted this through a law?
  - a) Charles Goodhart
  - b) Sir Alan Budd
  - c) William Butler

- Which MPC member landed himself in trouble with our friends in the North when he said "in a sense I suppose I do"?
  - a) Charles Goodhart
  - b) Sir Alan Budd
  - c) William Butler

How did your investments do?

- What was the date of the FTSE 100's summer peak?
  - a) June 14
  - b) July 2
  - c) July 20
- What was the date of the FTSE 100's low for the year?
  - a) August 8
  - b) August 5
  - c) September 15

What's in a name?

- Mike Kinski became chief executive of Stagecoach in January, leaving ScottishPower. What was his nickname in the electricity industry?
  - a) Mad Mike
  - b) Killer Kinski
  - c) Mike the Motivator
  - d) Cunning Kinski



Question 13 focuses on Mike Kinski who joined Stagecoach from ScottishPower. Was his nickname in the electricity industry Mad Mike, Killer Kinski, Mike the Motivator or Cunning Kinski?

- What major rebranding — no doubt at great expense — does ScottishPower propose after its US takeover of PacificCorp?
  - a) Bill Gates
  - b) Edgar Bronfman Jr
  - c) Warren Buffett
- Who was nicknamed "helicopter brain" but came down to earth with a crash after a two-year battle with his fellow directors?
  - a) Viridian
  - b) Elezantis
  - c) PTC International
  - d) Arcadia



Question 57: Lord Tebbit was once called a "semi-housetrained polcat". But how do you find your way from him to Sonic the Hedgehog through this cast of characters?

- Who told MPs about the problems of dealing with "sensitive flowers" in the aftermath of a business deal?
  - a) Alan Titchmarsh. He had just bought a new greenhouse and it was overheating.
  - b) Jan Leschly, chief executive of SmithKline Beecham. He had neglected his garden while trying — and failing — to arrange mergers with American Home Products and Glaxo Wellcome and Glaxo Wellcome.
  - c) Sir Richard Sykes.



- Why did both Lord Saatchi and Mick Jagger feel their wallets become considerably lighter in August?
  - a) They both donated generously to the Conservative Party
  - b) They are both shareholders in Megalonia, which issued a profits warning
  - c) They were both alleged to have slept with more than 1,000 women, causing their wives to sue for expensive divorces
  - d) The Spice Girls



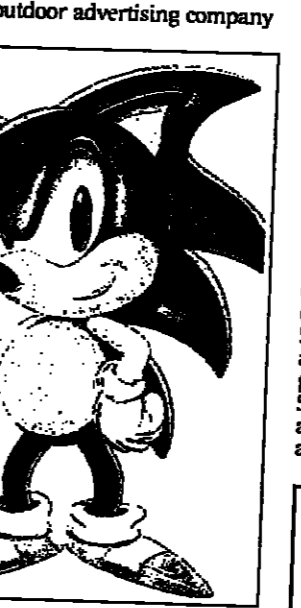
- Which Nobel prize-winning economist used their theories to jeopardise the health of the world's banking system?
  - a) Sir Terence Conran
  - b) Sir Richard Greenbury
  - c) Sir Talbot Buxton



- Who was replaced by Sir Richard Greenbury when Keith Oates, his deputy, was plotting to take over as chairman of Marks & Spencer?
  - a) On holiday in South India
  - b) In the staff canteen
  - c) At a Manchester United match



- Which feisty celebrity chef booked into Coronation Street?
  - a) Julian Crosby
  - b) James Crosby
  - c) Bing Crosby
  - d) On holiday in South India



- More Group by Clear Channel Communications of the US?
  - a) Jacques Delors
  - b) Jean-Michel Jarre
  - c) Jean-François Decaux
- Where did London-listed, US-controlled, Hong Kong-based Astec BSR hold a board meeting to consider its formal response to a takeover bid?
  - a) Blackstone
  - b) Patriot American Hospitality
  - c) Starwood Hotels & Resorts
- Which German company cashed in its chips on Tymside?
  - a) BASF
  - b) BMW
  - c) Siemens
- Who spent £450 million at a club in Pall Mall?
  - a) Prince Jefri of Brunei
  - b) Mohamed Al Fayed
  - c) Geoffrey Robinson
  - d) Cendant
- Who expected an autumn windfall, but ended up with red faces instead?
  - a) FTSE 100 this year?
  - b) WPP
  - c) COLT
- Which of the following is planning to get out of brewing early in the new year?
  - a) Greenalls
  - b) Vaux
  - c) Young's
  - d) Marston's
- How did Worthington, the textiles company, beat the slump in orders that has crippled the rest of the industry?
  - a) Julian Crosby
  - b) James Crosby
  - c) Bing Crosby
  - d) On holiday in South India
- Hyundai abandoned its semi-constructed microchip plant in Scotland. What did the local council suggest the building should be used as?
  - a) A shelter for the homeless
  - b) The Scottish Parliament
  - c) To cover a new mine
  - d) Europe's largest call-centre
- Over summer, FirstGroup's North Western Trains service in Manchester was so bad that the city's local authorities tried to sue the company. It takes £1.7 million subsidy a week — how was it punished by John O'Brien, franchising director?
  - a) With a £1.7 million punctuality fine
  - b) With a £10,000 punctuality fine
  - c) With a £17,000 million punctuality fine
  - d) With a £35,000 punctuality bonus
- Which of the following pub groups is run by a sibling of the chairman of JD Wetherspoon?
  - a) The Magic Pub Co
  - b) The Old English Pub Co
  - c) The Old Monk Co
  - d) The Old Sock Pub Co
- Who got on his bike after a difference of opinion with a group of financial regulators?
  - a) Who proposed marriage at Chez Nico on Park Lane, and to whom?
- Who was the shortest takeover bid in history?
  - a) Simple Exchange of Traded Stock
  - b) Stock Exchange Trading System
  - c) Simple English Trading System
  - d) Stupid Eggheads Trading's Stopped
- Which company that has never made a profit joined the FTSE 100 this year?
  - a) WPP
  - b) COLT
- What does Sets stand for?
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The answers to the quiz will appear on Boxing Day

Business has received a surprise Christmas package. It is also a surprisingly unwelcome one. Only by making an early departure was Peter Mandelson ever likely to find out that he had made such a good impression among business organisations if not among trade unions.

Margaret Beckett, the first Labour Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in modern times, still held a deep-dyed suspicion of business motives. This is not necessarily a bad qualification for leading the DTI, but it did not fit the Blairite mould too snugly.

Mr Mandelson still had the odd bridge to mend before residual business mistrust of new Labour could be herded into history. Much of his effort was directed to portraying Labour as a trustworthy partner. His Competitiveness White Paper, while having good ideas, mastered more as a public relations exercise, convincing doubters that new Labour cared about entrepreneurs. Chipping away at union recognition might help, too. Stephen Byers, being almost a

## DTI is no place for a purist

ministerial embodiment of new Labour, can probably take this conversion process for granted. Once the new Trade Secretary has got past the heavy handshakes, however, he will find it is easier to make a good impression at the DTI than to achieve much.

There is an easy assumption that the DTI and the Treasury are responsible for British industry. The Treasury has shorn itself of setting interest rates, but the tax system is crucial for prosperity. The DTI is more clearly a case of responsibility without power. It is thought a grand department for historical reasons. Today its budget is one of the smallest in Whitehall.

"International" trade policy has long since been ceded to the European Union, along with those endless international negotiations. The Trade Secretary can make suggestions, lobby and try to cope

with the consequences. Yet industries that suffer these consequences will still turn to him to do something to aid their plight.

A generation ago, the Government-owned organisations that delivered 12-15 per cent of the national income. Most of these state leviathans were in the maw of what is now the DTI.

By the time Michael Heseltine revived the grand title of President of the Board of Trade, it was becoming ceremonial, to the huge benefit of the British economy. Of the great state enterprises, only The Post Office and BNET remain.

Even those who persuaded Mr Mandelson to keep the Post Office in the public sector *pro tem* want the DTI to have as little as possible to do with it. BNET, though a rare national industrial winner, merely embarrasses new Labour.

The idea that every industry is

via the regulatory system for electricity. But ministers found how limited the DTI's power had become. Competition and influence are hard to pair in the same yoke.

Ironically for the departed Mandelson, Mr Byers will soon find that the DTI's activities are inevitably riven with conflicts of interest, not least between protecting consumers and promoting British enterprises that generate jobs, exports and centres of excellence. If his predecessors had always put consumer interest first, there would have been no GEC, no British Aerospace, no Diageo. British Airways is constantly presenting ministers with such conflicts.

To be a successful Trade Secretary, you cannot afford to be a purist. You need to muster the power you still have, be prepared to get your hands dirty and to take the heat from those you dis-

appoint. On all these grounds, Mr Mandelson was wrong to think of giving up his discretionary powers over merger decisions. Mr Byers should throw the persuasive arguments to "depoliticise" competition policy into the waste bin.

Competitiveness White Papers, another vaunted Heseltine innovation, are but effusions of impotence. Though well-meaning and occasionally helpful, they substitute a miasma of management consultancy for the wads of real taxpayers' money that Trade Secretaries used to wave around. It is good to be an enabling ministry, instead of Big Brother who knows best. But it is not enough.

Mr Heseltine's other contribution really is worth copying. He was avowedly prepared to intervene before breakfast, before lunch and before dinner on behalf of British industry. This is what

business needs from the DTI, even if we do not always appreciate it.

Mr Byers should be intervening, in cahoots with his colleagues, to ensure that reform of the European defence industry leaves one major group that is British led. Jobs, wealth, technological leadership and academic research all depend on Europe's biggest defence industry not being submerged in French or American-led groups.

A merger of British Aerospace and Marconi is plainly the vital prerequisite. The Trade Secretary's job is to bully the parties, if necessary, to stop other equally legitimate priorities prevailing.

He must also intervene on behalf of British companies that, just after our Gulf support for America, have been chosen by the US Trade Representative to bear the brunt of sanctions threatened in an ersatz trade war over bananas.

Here he has no power at all, but that is no excuse. As more power ebbs to Brussels, that will increasingly be the challenge for the minister popularity supposed to be responsible for British business.



THE TIMES UNIT TRUST PRICES

Main table containing unit trust prices for various funds, organized in columns with fund names and their corresponding prices.

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ETON FIVE FOOTBALL... THE TIMES THURSDAY DECEMBER 24 1998

ETON FIVE FOOTBALL... THE TIMES THURSDAY DECEMBER 24 1998

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Gilts and equities sharply higher

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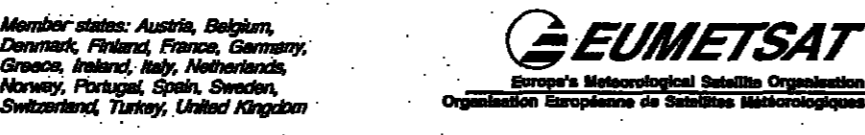
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Closing date 15. January 1999. For further information about these or other vacancies, please see EUMETSAT's web page: http://www.eumetsat.de



Formed in 1986 and comprising 17 European member states, EUMETSAT's roles is to establish, operate and exploit European meteorological satellite systems. Data from these systems are not only essential for precise and accurate weather forecasting, they also assist global observation and climatological programmes and directly benefit national economies by enabling marine, agricultural, aviation and other agencies to plan and act more effectively.

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Head of Training & Development

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Adare Printing Group PLC is a fast growing, dynamic organisation. Turnover has grown from £3m to c.£160m in seven years, mainly in the UK. Our growth has been fuelled by the development of opportunities in printing and related industries.

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- ACROSS**
- 1 Releasing responsibility in animal death (4-7)
  - 7 Love-controlling prices not on statute book (6,3,6)
  - 15 Return in centre of procession (7)
  - 16 Far-sighted offer to adopt tax haven (9)
  - 17 Parisian is among stupid types in deep countryside (3,6)
  - 18 Illustrator badly treated by dealers (9)
  - 19 No partners are politically correct (3-6)
  - 20 Jane's Catherine lost her head, leaving nothing but a furious lover (7)
  - 21 Queen's style is to avoid extremes (4)
  - 22 Imagines attending demonstration that pianist might give (8,2,2,10)
  - 23 Depend, having no prospects (4-3)
  - 27 Ancient type has wit to conceal a woman (7)
  - 28 Spanish chief writer comes to be famous (9)
  - 30 One's sacrificial opener in athletics run out, say (9)
  - 31 Teacher and some pupils that may be employed in language laboratory (8)
  - 32 Object recommendations to sack irascible person (8)
  - 33 More deeply blue flower, edged with gold, seen on motorway (7)
  - 34 Tree woman treated was infested by pest (4-5)
  - 35 Promise to give Spanish girl son? That's saying too much (9)
  - 36 Its back to the Oval, amid widespread excitement (9)
  - 37 Used civet, perhaps, to be this? (9)
  - 38 Lady from Castile's vapid daughter abducted by guerrilla (7)
  - 46 Nothing left in satisfactory condition (3,5)
  - 47 Pacific, in part and complete, say (8)
  - 49 Drink seals ruin - no opening for war (9)
  - 51 Holding a jack back, one drawn from pack - nothing but low-value diamond (9)
  - 53 Officer wearing a shade of green never bettered (3-4)
  - 54 Composer who makes a mark (7)
  - 57 Crowd of dancers Wordsworth visualised with pleasure from his couch (1,4,2,6,9)
  - 60 Duty to cut dividend by 20 per cent (4)
  - 62 Was delighted by having name put in to be decorated (7)
  - 64 Promotional offer from butcher for hearty eater? (4-5)
  - 65 Went over story that tallied once more (9)
  - 66 Hypocritical account I received after husband interrupts classic adulterer (9)
  - 67 Signs of restiveness in prison gangs (9)
  - 68 National drink that briefly has appeal (7)
  - 69 Platonic form of relationship? (7,3)
  - 70 Surely one or other is not right (11)

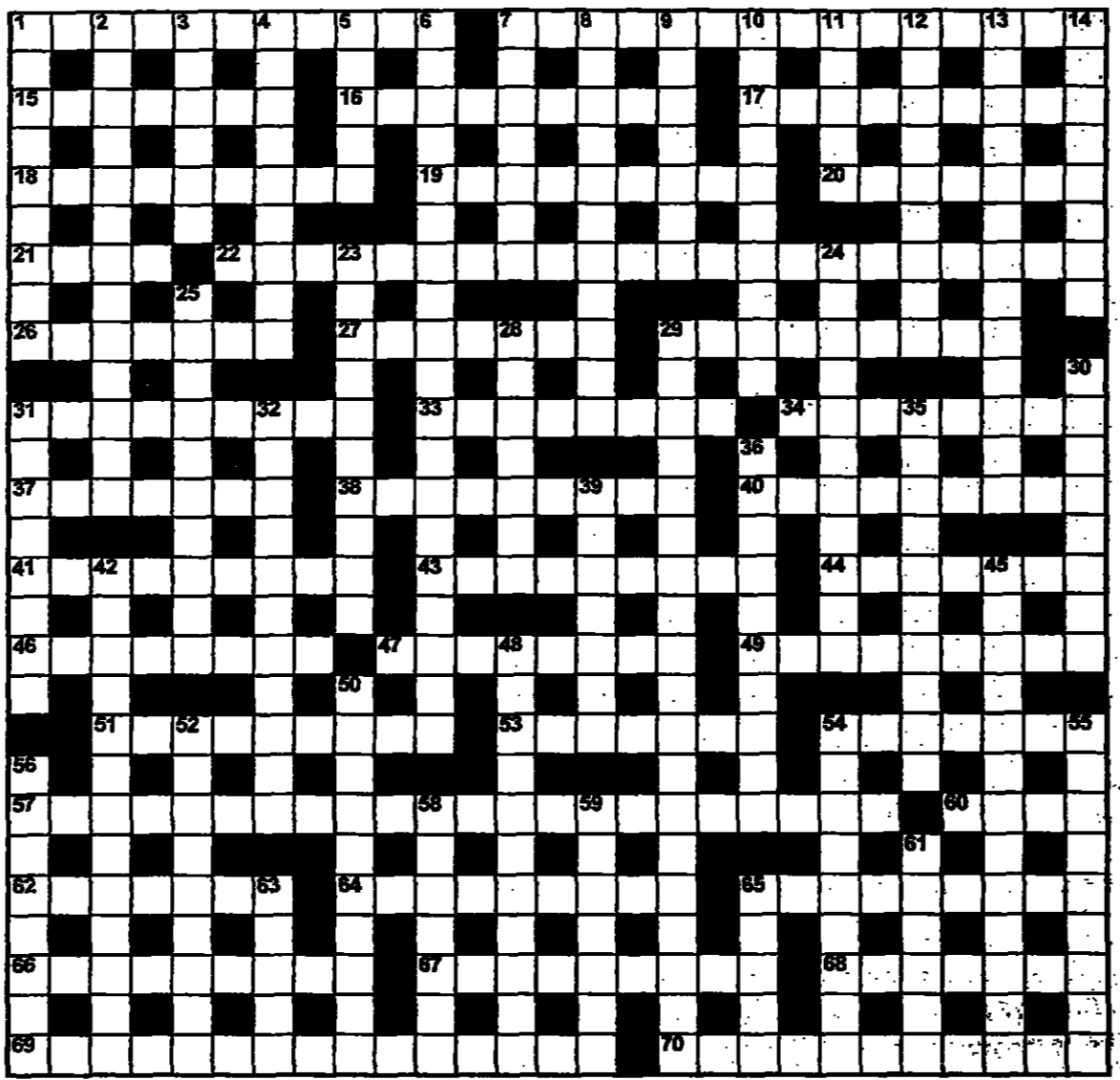
- DOWN**
- 1 Chairman's demand to AGM voters should stiffen their spines (9)
  - 2 Short play needs promoter's support to screen (7-6)
  - 3 Pretended to have no power to keep subs up (6)
  - 4 A bit of work needed to secure entrance (9)
  - 5 Suggest just going topless (5)
  - 6 Refrain from comment on colour of lake plants (5,4,3,6,1)
  - 7 Helpers, and another helping (7)
  - 8 Offer stock response to order from the military (7,4)
  - 9 European is valiant in struggle (7)
  - 10 Girls capture partisan leader and team in body, part of resistance movement (10)
  - 11 Spaniard exalts the unconscious over the conscious personality (5)
  - 12 Praising Times, with ringing endorsement initially for leader (9)
  - 13 In a time of rising, island appears above the current (13)
  - 14 Not fully believe girl was with young trooper around noon (8)
  - 23 Drunken little steep - a result of flipping well being in one's cups (10)
  - 24 I start to rework divinity lesson with teaching story that's impossible to make good (11)
  - 25 Place Guardian where clever chap can go over points (6,4)
  - 28 What green may mean to Indian state chief? (2,5)
  - 29 Foreseeable argument in changeable work to be done (9,10)
  - 30 People use four-letter words such as suit, sock, ties (8)
  - 31 He wants the government to be popular (8)
  - 32 Good poker hand spoiled immediately (8,3)
  - 35 Eventually brought into court case with more than two parties involved (10)
  - 36 Wasted beer, perhaps, and food (10)
  - 39 Avoiding slight contact - fully covered (7)
  - 42 Attempt to exploit colour bar that's foiled perhaps (4,9)
  - 45 Late sanction I wielded? (3-1-4-5)
  - 48 Heather supports hand, making a flute (11)
  - 50 Low farce, if criminal is one to give government legal advice (3,7)
  - 52 Keeping on soldiers over potential hostilities, we hear (9)
  - 54 Pick first in straw poll (9)
  - 55 Pressure deflected from highest office for official house (9)
  - 56 The gall, to celebrate the Restoration (3-5)
  - 58 Race over each ocean (4-3)
  - 59 Critical notice given to literary work (7)
  - 61 In game, have innings - a duck, not playing with exact timing (6)
  - 63 Slow speech makes academic a bore (5)
  - 65 One getting out of bed for a pipe (5)

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

In our Christmas Eve Jumbo Crossword competition, a prize of £100 will be awarded for the first correct solution opened on Thursday, January 14, 1999.

Entries to Christmas Eve Jumbo (200), Weekend, *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

The winner and solution will be published in Weekend on Saturday, January 16



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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## Times Two Jumbo Christmas Eve

There is no prize for this crossword. The solution will be published on Monday, December 28

- ACROSS**
- 1 Learning study award (11)
  - 7 Gibbons *Starkadder* book (4,4,5)
  - 15 Small brochure (7)
  - 16 Jotters (9)
  - 17 Sun's turning points (9)
  - 18 Gave impetus to (9)
  - 19 Flood with light (9)
  - 20 Soothe (7)
  - 21 Level (of seats) (4)
  - 22 *Hardy Oak/Everdene* novel (3,4,3,7,5)
  - 26 Improve further (7)
  - 27 Unjust dark? (3,4)
  - 29 Party pledge list (9)
  - 31 Herb. trad. poor sight remedy (9)
  - 33 Simple egg dish (8)
  - 34 More attractive (8)
  - 37 Spanish money (7)
  - 38 Getting louder (mus) (9)
  - 40 Selfish (9)
  - 41 Travel concession tickets (9)
  - 43 Not protected in dray (3-6)
  - 44 Sp. wine/ lemonade drink (7)
  - 46 In wavy motion (8)
  - 47 Stand in (for) (8)
  - 49 Keeping Tom activities (9)
  - 51 Most full of rich dairy product (9)
  - 53 Assimilates (food) summaries (7)
  - 54 Purple meadow plant (7)
  - 57 King Arthur's chivalrous companions (7,2,3,5,5)
  - 60 Fashionable side-street (4)
  - 62 *Ena* (naughty) *hacker* *Oriental* (7)
  - 64 *Beverly Hills Cop* (5)
  - 65 *Yves* (5)
  - 66 *Massachusetts* (9)
  - 67 *High* (5)
  - 68 Can province Great Lake (7)
  - 69 IC's best not to speak (7,2,6)
  - 70 *Amalfi* (7)
- DOWN**
- 1 A preservative; gunpowder ingredient (9)
  - 2 Utterly (eg in love) (4,4,5)
  - 3 Sprawled (6)
  - 4 Get one's own back (9)
  - 5 Whetted (5)
  - 6 Rule by women (9,10)
  - 7 Floor show (7)
  - 8 David - Lib. PM (5,6)
  - 9 Ice-cream with fruits, nuts (7)
  - 10 Deceptive (10)
  - 11 Ship's lowest deck (5)
  - 12 Four joint rulers (eg in Bib. Galilee) (9)
  - 13 Digger up of past (13)
  - 14 Naughty actions (8)
  - 23 Obsessive zeal (10)
  - 24 In wicked way (11)
  - 25 Not looking for faults (10)
  - 28 Fr. town, its lace (7)
  - 29 Woman trying to look young (6,7,2,4)
  - 30 Loudly announce (8)
  - 31 Posh shop (8)
  - 32 Gourmets (11)
  - 35 Having three sides (10)
  - 36 Zoroastrian scriptures (4-6)
  - 39 In want of (7)
  - 42 A voltage transformer (9,4)
  - 45 BBC prestige talk series (5,8)
  - 48 Tube, secret (eg conspiracy) (11)
  - 50 Fusses, commotions (*informal*) (10)
  - 52 One from Addis Ababa (9)
  - 54 Old 2/6d (4-5)
  - 55 Water store (9)
  - 56 Captains: some hauliers (8)
  - 58 *Wardens* (8)
  - 59 *Wardens* (8)
  - 63 Jig about (5)
  - 65 Actor in eg crowd scene (5)

## FREE BOOKS FOR SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN THE TIMES

# Millions of FREE books for schools



Today *The Times*, with *The Sunday Times* and *Walkers* crisps and snacks, offers you the chance to take part in Britain's biggest books giveaway with our Free Books for Schools promotion.

Developed in support of the National Year of Reading, which runs to August next year, the initiative aims to put millions of free books into schools to replenish their libraries and give children the opportunity to develop a love of reading and expand their imaginations, creativity and curiosity.

Anyone and everyone - parents, pupils, teachers, friends and relatives - can join in the scheme, simply by collecting tokens from *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *Walkers* crisps and snacks.

There are more than 150 titles for schools to choose from. They include Shakespeare plays, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *Dubliners* by James Joyce, *Mrs Armitage on Wheels*, by Quentin Blake, as well as atlases, English and foreign language dictionaries, wildlife and science books. The books are suitable for children between the ages of five and 16 and are divided into reading abilities from key stage 1 to key stage 4, and P1 to S5 in Scotland.

Schools select their free books from a list of approved titles and send off enough tokens for their order. Many of the titles can be ordered for as little as 100 tokens each.

Between January and April next year, tokens can be found on packets of *Walkers* crisps and snacks, in *The Times* each day from January 4 and in *The Sunday Times* each week from January 10. Tokens will also be printed in *The Sun* and the *News of the World*. Schools are invited to register for the scheme now and receive 250 starter tokens free - enough for two free books.

**THE TIMES SCHOOL REGISTRATION FORM FREE**

This form must be completed only by school teachers. To get your free books for schools kit to participate in the scheme, complete full details of your school in block capitals below and send form to: Free Books for Schools, Registrations, FREEPOST (LE8 0D4), Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7BR. Closing date February 28, 1999.

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Richard Evans casts his net wide in search of Boxing Day winners

Mudlarks favoured in King George

CONFIRMED mudlarks. such as See More Business and Imperial Call, yesterday received a boost to their chances...

With the prospect of more rain arriving at the Sunbury race on Christmas Day, the going will definitely be close to good to soft and may even become soft...

RICHARD EVANS

Nap: JULTARA (3.05 Wincanton) NB: Scotland Lad (3.10 Ayr)



The Grey Monk, centre, looks sure to be in the thick of the action in the Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase at Wetherby on Boxing Day

Centre of attention, the best betting opportunities are often found at other meetings and, after burning the midnight oil, have attempted to locate one or two wagers at each of the other nine fixtures.

Santa Concerto, a promising hurdler and useful recruit chasing two seasons ago, showed all his old zest when returning after a 22-month absence to win at Ayr 19 days ago. He makes a quick return to the Scottish track for the Jockeys' Chase (2.35) in search of his third course victory...

A course and distance winner just over a year ago, he shaped well behind Santa Concerto on his seasonal reappearance until lack of fitness held him back and he should be a rewarding price. Norman Mason is enjoying a fine season as an owner-trainer, assisted by Richard Guest, and he appears to have found a winning spot for Khaepee in the Rent Roll Cup Chase (2.30) at Sedgfield. Twice a winner over course and distance, the versatile six-year-old had an outing over hurdles at Caterick nine days ago when he showed improved form behind Cumbr-

course Co UK Chase (1.20), while Churchstan stands out in the EBF National Hunt Novices' Hurdle (1.55) after a promising fifth on his hurdling debut behind All Gong at Cheltenham. Wincanton stages a particularly good card and the best bet is the Ian Williams-trained Jultara who props up the weights in the Lord Stalbridge Memorial Chase (3.05). He lost his way last season, having won two chases at Ascot in the spring of 1997, but he has dropped down the handicap and looks worth an interest after two good runs this season, behind Treet Mill, over

course and distance, and Clevely Remark on the same card. Jim Old will be looking to maintain his 31 per cent strike-rate with Three Farthings in the Stakis Casinos Handicap Hurdle (2.35). The Christmas Tide Novices' Chase (1.30) at Huntingdon has attracted several fancied runners, including Double Tempo, Specialize and Winsford Hill, but Symphony's Son is the choice after an eye-catching return to action at Leicester 17 days ago. The Fenland track should also offer another winner for the in-form Nicky Henderson, who sends Garrison

BIG-RACE LINE-UP

Table listing horse race details for the King George VI Chase, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

DETAILED FORM GUIDE TO THE NINE CONTENDERS

Table providing detailed form guides for nine horses, including Challenger Du Luc, Imperial Call, Simply Dashing, Coome Hill, Mulligan, Escartefigue, See More Business, Teeton Mill, and Mulligan.

WETHERBY

THUNDERER 2.45 Tikopia, 1.15 Foundry Lane, 1.50 Once Acre For Luck, 2.25 Strath Royal, 2.55 Forestal, 1.25 Lord Lamb.

12.45 BOXING DAY NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE

Table listing details for the Boxing Day Novices Handicap Hurdle, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

1.15 GEORGE GREGORY NOVICES CHASE

Table listing details for the George Gregory Novices Chase, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

1.50 ST JOHN AMBULANCE HANDICAP HURDLE

Table listing details for the St John Ambulance Handicap Hurdle, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

2.25 ROWLAND MEYRICK HANDICAP CHASE

Table listing details for the Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

2.55 SUPERMASTER HANDICAP CHASE

Table listing details for the Supermaster Handicap Chase, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

3.25 CHRISTMAS NOVICES HURDLE

Table listing details for the Christmas Novices Hurdle, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

COURSE SPECIALISTS

Table listing course specialists for various races, including horse names and odds.

WINCANTON

THUNDERER 1.00 Peg O The Wood, 1.30 Morstock, 2.05 Wayward King, 2.35 Pappo Kharisma, 3.05 Betty's Boy, 3.35 Kraboonik.

1.00 M & J PICTURES MARES ONLY NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE

Table listing details for the M & J Pictures Mares Only National Hunt Novices Hurdle, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

1.30 HARRY DUPOSE HANDICAP CHASE

Table listing details for the Harry Dupoze Handicap Chase, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

2.05 MID SEASON CHASE (INTERMEDIATE RACE)

Table listing details for the Mid Season Chase, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

2.35 STAKES CASINOS HANDICAP HURDLE

Table listing details for the Stakes Casinos Handicap Hurdle, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

3.05 LORD STALBRIDGE MEMORIAL GOLD CUP (HANDICAP CHASE)

Table listing details for the Lord Stalbridge Memorial Gold Cup, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

3.35 PARKERS CATENERS NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE

Table listing details for the Parkers Caterers Novices Handicap Hurdle, including horse names, odds, and jockeys.

COURSE SPECIALISTS

Table listing course specialists for various races, including horse names and odds.

Table listing Thunderer race results with columns for race name, odds, and horse names.

Table listing 12.40 Pertemps Managed Services Novices Hurdle race details.

Table listing 1.10 Network Design International Feltham Novices Chase race details.

Table listing 1.45 Pertemps City Network Handicap Hurdle race details.

Table listing 2.20 Pertemps King George VI Chase race details.

Table listing 2.55 Network Personnel Novices Chase race details.

Table listing 3.25 Pertemps Catering Handicap Hurdle race details.

COURSE SPECIALISTS

Table listing course specialists for various races, including horse names and odds.

TRAINERS' PREFERENCES

Table listing trainer preferences for various races, including horse names and odds.

THE TIMES

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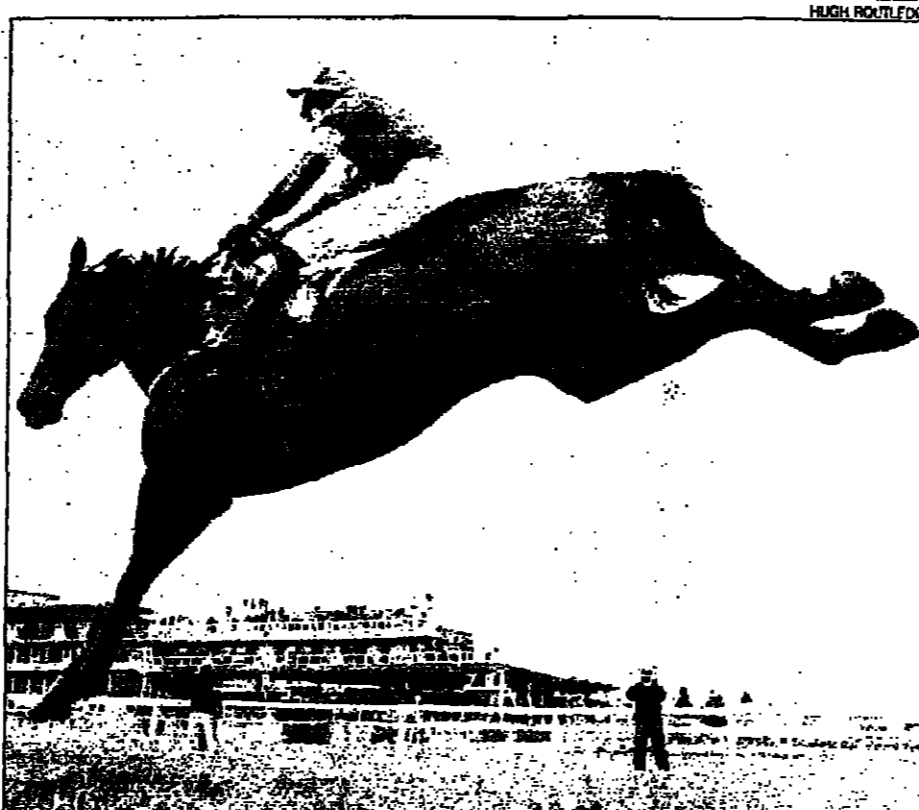


Spendid can continue winning run

By RICHARD EVANS, RACING CORRESPONDENT

SPENDID can help to erase Christmas hangers and give to the aid of punters on a Boxing Day card at Kempton which looks fraught with difficulty.

The David Nicholson-trained six-year-old was an above-average handicapper last year, winning three times as well as being placed at the Cheltenham and Aintree Festivals.



Spendid is fancied to extend his winning chase sequence at Kempton on Boxing Day



ing Day nap in the Network Series International Felmah Novices Chase (1.10). The tail-flashing antics of King of Sparta offer a hint of his past misdemeanours, but the five-year-old has proved himself a reformed character since switching stables.

The opening Pertemps Managed Services Novices Hurdle (2.40) is definitely a race to watch, with several fancied runners clashing. The Irish rider, follow The Leader, is probably the best bet, although he faces some lightly

enced hurdlers open to bags of improvement. Lawhik, useful on the Flat in France, made an impressive hurdling debut at Haydock 12 days ago and is well regarded by Charlie Mann, while Greidan Dart is also on the upgrade.

However, with Nicky Henderson's string in such cracking form, it may be worth taking a risk with Eagles Rest, who missed last year after winning a bumper and showing decent novice hurdle form the previous season.

THUNDERER 1.00 Young Thruster. 1.30 Double Tempo. 2.00 Castle Owen. 2.30 Swing Quartet. 3.00 Black Statement. 3.30 Talis.

GOING: GOOD TO SOFT (SOFT IN PLACES)

1.00 FESTIVE SPIRIT NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE (22,740; 3m 20) (18 runners)

- 1-3 THE WRITER 21 (6) P J Sheehan 5-11-2 M Bony 2-25 YOUNG THRUSTER 21 (6) M J Charles 5-11-2 J Goldsmith 21

1.30 CHRISTMAS TIDE NOVICES CHASE (23,520; 2m 41 110yd) (12)

- 1-2-3 BURN OUT 48 (6) J Gold 6-12-0 I Aspell 2-21 CASTLE OWEN 10 (6) S J Dineen 6-11-3 J Thornton

2.00 CHRISTMAS BOX HANDICAP HURDLE (22,472; 2m 51 110yd) (17)

- 1-2-3 BURN OUT 48 (6) J Gold 6-12-0 I Aspell 2-21 CASTLE OWEN 10 (6) S J Dineen 6-11-3 J Thornton

3.00 BOXING DAY HANDICAP CHASE (23,670; 2m 110yd) (8)

- 1-2-3 OLMAG 23 (6) S J Dineen 6-12-2 J Thornton 2-21 MACHIN 15 (6) J George 5-11-10 J Aspell

3.30 MISTLETOE STANDARD OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE (21,392; 2m 110yd) (11)

- 1-2-3 BOB'S BROTHER 10 (6) J P Sheehan 5-11-11 J Aspell 2-21 BOB'S BROTHER 10 (6) J P Sheehan 5-11-11 J Aspell

3.45 TURKEY SELLING STAKES (21,914; 1m 40) (12)

- 1-2-3 BANBURY 56 (6) P J Sheehan 5-11-11 J Aspell 2-21 BANBURY 56 (6) P J Sheehan 5-11-11 J Aspell

4.15 PARSONS NOISE HANDICAP (Div 1) (21,945; 1m 100yd) (13)

- 1-2-3 LIBERTY BELL 43 (6) H Jones 5-11-11 J Aspell 2-21 LIBERTY BELL 43 (6) H J Jones 5-11-11 J Aspell

4.45 BRANDY BUTTER HANDICAP (Div 1) (21,882; 6) (10)

- 1-2-3 DAVIS ROCK 40 (6) M J Charles 5-11-11 J Aspell 2-21 DAVIS ROCK 40 (6) M J Charles 5-11-11 J Aspell

COURSE SPECIALISTS

NON-RESERVE TRAINERS: Level Handicaps, 26 winners from 110 races, 23.6%, 17 from 107, 15.9%, 17 from 107, 15.9%

HUNTERWOOD: Trainers: M. P. Jones, 5 winners from 14 runners, 35.7%, 3 from 10, 30.0%, 3 from 10, 30.0%

Weather forecast shapes market

THE prospect of rain up to the weekend has been behind the latest market moves for the King George VI Chase at Kempton on Saturday.

The latest weather forecasts are predicting that there will be plenty of rain about in the next 48 hours, and the ground at Kempton is now likely to be soft, with horses like See More Business, Tecton Mill and Escartefigue.

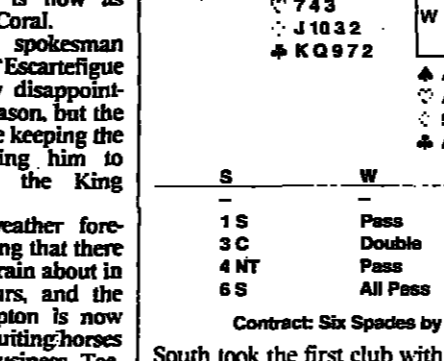
McCoy on Eudipe

TONY MCCOY has committed himself to riding the Martin Pipe-trained Eudipe in the Coral Welsh National at Chepstow on Monday.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Andrew Robson won the prize for the best defended hand at the 1998 Lederer Memorial Trophy, played at the Young Chelsea Bridge Club.



South took the first club with the ace (dummy discarding a heart) and played a diamond to the king and Robson's ace.

Although with the favourable heart position the contract could still be made, declarer followed the natural line of trying to set up the diamonds.

WORD-WATCHING

- RANGLES a. Oxford examinations b. Back streets in Hull c. Gravel

AYR THUNDERER 12.55 Mr Busby. 1.25 Wynyard Knight. 2.00 Supreme Soviet. 2.35 Santa Concerto. Kingennis. 3.40 Kris Green.

12.55 MOTHER GOOSE NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE (22,682; 2m) (13 runners)

1.25 GOOSE NOVICES CHASE (23,188; 2m) (9)

2.00 MIDWINTER NOVICES HANDICAP CHASE (23,128; 2m 41) (6)

2.35 GAITY THEATRE HANDICAP CHASE (23,474; 3m) (15)

3.10 GLAUKIT GUSSE NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE (22,794; 2m 41) (10)

3.40 SQUIRE HANDICAP HURDLE (22,902; 2m 41) (7)

COURSE SPECIALISTS

TRANSERS: M. J. Jones, 5 winners from 12 runners, 41.7%, M. P. Jones, 3 from 10, 30.0%, 3 from 10, 30.0%

NEWTON ABBOT THUNDERER 1.20 Native Fling. 1.55 Dunbury Flyer. 2.30 Cavallero. 3.00 Sadler's Secret. 3.30 Holdimcrose. 4.00 Happy Minstral.

1.20 WHY NOT EMMAH: MARACOURSE.CO.UK HANDICAP CHASE (22,748; 2m 110yd) (10 runners)

1.55 EBF NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE (QUALIFIER) (22,726; 2m 11) (8)

2.30 LANGSTONE CLIFF HOTEL HANDICAP CHASE (23,485; 3m 21 110yd) (5)

3.00 THURLESTONE HOTEL JUVENILE NOVICES HURDLE (3-Y-O) (22,264; 2m 10) (10)

3.30 INTERNET ON WWW.ECLIPSE.CO.UK MARACOURSE/NOVICES CHASE (22,801; 2m 51 110yd) (6)

4.00 ROYAL CASTLE HOTEL NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE (22,299; 2m 10) (13)

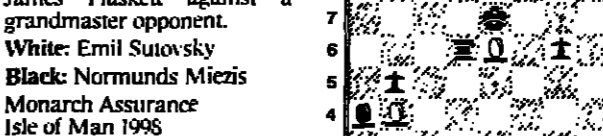
COURSE SPECIALISTS

TRANSERS: P. Jones, 5 winners from 191 runners, 26.2%, M. P. Jones, 3 from 10, 30.0%, 3 from 10, 30.0%

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Emil Sutovsky of Israel shared first place with Nigel Short in the powerful Monarch Assurance tournament in the Isle of Man.



White: Jaan Elvest Black: James Plaskett Monarch Assurance Isle of Man 1998

Sicilian Defence

White: Normunds Miezis Black: Normunds Miezis Monarch Assurance Isle of Man 1998

WINNING MOVE

Black to play. This position is a variation from the game Speelman-Agdestein, Hastings Premier 1991. Jon Speelman, realising what was in store for him here, had already resigned this position.



RUGBY UNION

Blinkered board makes scapegoats of Welsh dragons

THE International Rugby Board (IRB) is entrusted with administering rugby union's bylaws and regulations and ensuring that clubs abide by them. Regulations are, after all, there for the good governance of the game. But to what extent must these be so strictly adhered to that they lack a sense of justice?

Gerald Davies mourns the decline of Welsh rugby and pins blame on the game's governors

Ivory tower in Dublin some time ago and Wales. Then they might see what damage has been wrought to rugby in recent years and for which the governing body in Wales must admit some responsibility.

survival. In the past six years, the structure of the game has been dismantled without any thing positive put in its place.

Spectators, for any match, are passing the game by. The IRB should, for a change, come to witness a club game and not just the internationals that can distort its vision of a flourishing game.

Rugby in Wales is losing its grip on the public imagination. Crowds are dwindling; the standard of competition is below par. Rugby is inadequate sponsor is missing. None of this squares with the IRB view of a flourishing game.

In an attempt to arrest what seemed to be a terminal decline, Cardiff and Swansea no longer felt they could rely on the body charged with the responsibility of promoting, fostering, encouraging, controlling and improving rugby union in Wales. They had to look to other means of sustaining rugby within their clubs.

Thus, hitherto this season, their grounds have echoed with the kind of enthusiasm and expectancy that is becoming a distant memory in Welsh rugby. It is Cardiff and Swansea that are promoting the game. It is they, and not the union, who are improving and sustaining the life of Welsh rugby. Yet it is the clubs that are being punished as the guilty parties.



Sex appeal: Evans shows the style that wooed Wales after Bath, his club, had beaten Brive in the European Cup final at Bordeaux last January

Newcastle keep faith with youth

THERE will remain room for only one 35-year-old in the Newcastle team for the weekend. Steve Bates, the coach, will not be making an unlikely appearance out of retirement to join Rob Andrew at half back against West Hartlepool on Sunday since Andrew, director of rugby as well as fly half, has expressed his confidence in Hall Charlton.

Sevens seeks more friends in North

The International Rugby Board (IRB) hopes to start its showase International Sevens Grand Prix next December. This month, tender documents have gone out to 84 member unions inviting applications to host one of the 10 to 14 tournaments that will constitute the worldwide event.

Loose Talk

four-year £1 million deal has been blighted by the Millennium Stadium development saga, remains to be seen. In 1997 the final was played at a reduced-capacity Ashton Gate, Bristol, was the venue this year. The 1998-99 final had been scheduled for Cardiff but the stadium won't be ready by May, hence the August proposal.

Sexy Evans

He may be in the autumn of his rugby career, but Iwan Evans still has pulling power. The 35-year-old former Wales wing has recently been voted the sexiest Welshman of the 20th century by newspaper readers in the Principality.

FOR THE RECORD

Table with columns for ETON FIVES, FOOTBALL, and other sports results. Includes dates and scores for various matches.

MAIN HOLIDAY FIXTURES

Table listing football fixtures for Saturday and Sunday, including league names and match details.

Table titled 'SNOW REPORTS' with columns for location, depth, conditions, and weather. Lists snowfall amounts and forecasts for various regions.

Table titled 'RUGBY UNION' listing fixtures for the Scottish Premier League, Scottish League, and other competitions.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES. Includes various notices such as 'PUBLIC NOTICES', 'LEGAL NOTICES', and 'TRUSTEE ACTS'.

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# Upbeat Brazil hope to mask flaws



**Rob Hughes** visits the country bidding to convince Fifa that it will be able to overcome economic recession and increasing crime



Football remains the lifeblood of Brazil's youth, whose love of the game has not been dimmed by the harsh realities of life

Yesterday in São Paulo, the powerhouse of Brazilian commerce and industry and the cradle of its football, the final of the 11-month national championship was played in broad daylight. It would have been more atmospheric, more profitable, more bearable at night, when the temperature drops below 30C, but the football authorities took so long to find a safe stadium for Corinthians of São Paulo, to meet Cruzeiro, of Belo Horizonte, that Rede Globo, the leading television network, insisted that nine o'clock was the immutable hour of a Christmas special featuring Xuxa.

Xuxa is Brazil's answer to the Spice Girls, but to slot in football at 4.30pm would once have been considered sacrilege. So much for Brazil's reputation as the world's foremost soccer country. So much for São Paulo, the largest city in the southern hemisphere, with 22 million inhabitants in a metropolitan sprawl five times the size of Paris, but unable to find an accommodating home for the most important game of the year.

Like the moribund Maracanã in Rio de Janeiro, the best that São Paulo has, the Morumbi, is a decrepit arena reduced from a capacity of 138,032 in its heyday to below half that. It takes hardy, or foolhardy, fans to enter the elevated stand that, when the *torcedores* are impassioned, shakes convulsively. The tremors are such that television pictures jump around in people's homes and though safety officials demanded that 72 "shock absorbers" were implanted into the foundations, the owners apparently negotiated the figure down to three.

How can Brazil, its economy stored up by a \$41.5 billion (25 million) International Monetary Fund loan (IMF), its stadiums disintegrating and transportation antiquated, be a serious contender to stage the 2006 World Cup final? How can this country of such beauty, such success on other people's playing-fields, be touted in the corridors of Fifa as the dark horse to snatch the event from South Africa, Germany and England?

The answer: Fifa, the world governing body, has never been constrained by credibility, otherwise Argentina in 1978 and Mexico in 1986 could not have produced such proud and joyous World Cups when one was under murderous military repression and the other in the aftermath of earthquake devastation.



Xuxa took precedence over Brazil's biggest match of the year

To add to Brazil's woes, while the safety issue regarding the South Africa bid is paramount, the citizens of São Paulo, the *Paulistas*, will tell you that their own transition, from 22 years of military rule to the present fledgling democracy, is anything but painless. There is an alarming rise in "fast kidnaps", where young women stop at a red light, have their vehicles broken into and are either raped, robbed or held in ransom — or all three.

Thus, the two most romantic propositions — giving the World Cup to Africa for the first time, or to Brazil for the first time in many people's recollection — are flawed. Fifa's inspectors have yet to examine their infrastructures, but it would take adventurous minds to follow the instinct of

the Fifa president, Sepp Blatter, to widen the scope of the World Cup.

What we know from Pretoria is that President Nelson Mandela is prepared to do all in his persuasion to make South Africa ready. In Brasília, in Block A of the ministry buildings, things are more equivocal.

Georges Lamazière, *Chefe de Gabinete* to the Government, talks football with the true love of a Brazilian. But as President Cardoso reshapes his cabinet to carry out the reforms incumbent with a \$41.5 billion loan, there is nothing on the table for World Cup 2006.

"I guess they [the CBF] are beginning to roll the ball," Lamazière said, "but they have not told us. Here in government, we are certain that the plan for social reform is very well provided for and, indeed, Brazil has been among the best in the world at resisting the pressures on world currency values. When it comes to major events, we demonstrated with the United Nations Environment Conference our capability — the crime rates dropped dramatically in Rio de Janeiro and transportation was made to work with great success. And we do have a major celebration on our horizon, the 500th anniversary of the discovery of Brazil by the Portuguese in April 1500. That will be a big event."

And the World Cup? The Government awaits word. "The buzz word here is privatization," Lamazière said. Calls on leading São Paulo companies and commercial centres did not suggest that the CBF has yet taken the route of private financing, but Lamazière concluded: "We Brazilians like the excitement of working against the clock. We are not Germans who work against a 20-year clock."



Tostão: social priorities

Teixeira, a Fifa executive committee member not overly loved even by his father-in-law, João Havelange, the former Fifa autocrat, might deem December a bad month to broadcast his bid. The Government, reshaping to drive through the austerity measures and the social security reform that come with the IMF loan, has no sports ministry. Pelé departed that office last summer.

Grandiose plans for a sporting event beyond the millennium might not be too popular among industrial bosses and workers, who marched together in São Paulo on Monday, protesting at cutbacks in their pensions of up to 20 per cent. Nor will motorists warm to the spending of millions on sporting infrastructure while the price of cars rises up to 6 per cent next month to pay the social reform levy.

Teixeira, however, marches to his own tune. While Nike bankrolls his schemes, while club presidents exchange their support for his largesse in using the national squad for obscure non-competitive matches on their grounds, he survives. And his vision has a certain logic.

In Brazilian embassies abroad, indeed in Brasília, the seat of government, they can see the attraction of football, as intrinsic to the 165 million population as blood in the veins: staging the big event, bringing the world to São Paulo and Recife just when, if all goes well, the resurgence of Brazilian finance is forecast. Nothing is quite like football, the opiate of the people, to nourish the goodwill factor.

Soccer will never die in Brazil. It will revert to the streets. Indeed, in São Paulo, where Corinthians took inspiration and the name from the English amateur club when it toured there in 1910, it is already on the streets of the poor, in squalid areas inhabited by the largest Japanese population abroad, or by Italians.

The city's past is laced with memories; of Rivelino, whose free kicks seemed not of this world and who is doing very nicely, thank you; and, alas, of Garrincha, the "Little Bird" on the wing with the withered leg, who died one Christmas as an institutionalised alcoholic. São Paulo is by no means pretty, but it breathes football. Everywhere there are the children of the night — boys scrounging or kicking anything from a rat to a rag ball, girls distressingly young, for hire by the hour.

The Christmas lights cannot hide the disfiguration of serious industrial downturn and daylight brings only mixed relief. The polluted River Tiete stagnates. The girls flow. And the boys watch, but often the moving ball, even in teeming streets, attracts them even more.

Another leading commentator is Tostão, the player justifiably considered the intellectual footballer of the Pelé era. Tostão played in the 1966 World Cup, helped to win a World Cup in Mexico in 1970 and was finished prematurely by a detached retina. He became an orthopaedic doctor, living a life away from his game for ten years.

"Social problems should be this country's priority," Tostão said. "In my heart, I have a big wish to see a World Cup in

## THE COUNTRIES THAT ARE COMMITTED TO BID FOR 2006

**B**idding for the 2006 World Cup reaches its first official milestone a week today, the date by which countries wishing to enter the billion-dollar race must lodge a letter of intent with Fifa, the world governing body of football.

The seven letters so far received are from England, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, Ghana and Morocco. Nigeria has yet to confirm speculation that it intends to bid.

Ghana has suggested a pan-African World Cup, across the vast continent that has never staged the main event and Argentina talked of proposing a joint venture with Brazil. However, the 24-man Fifa executive committee, which determines the outcome, will not favour another complicated joint bid so close to the 2002 Japan-South Korea World Cup.

It will be one nation, probably chosen from South Africa, Germany, Brazil and England. The bids — involving enormous political, commercial and logistical commitment — face four subsequent deadlines. By April 30, 1999, the countries must confirm their intent by July 31 they must produce a complete presentation; by the end of September a Fifa inspection panel will assess the infrastructures; and in March 2000 the vote will be taken.

The prize is extraordinary, but so are the demands of organising a 32-nation event involving 12 stadiums capable of seating 40,000, with travel, accommodation, security and telecommunications also to be considered.

Political and economic stability will help, as will the ability to keep the heads of the hosting Football Association in situ.

## Gullit tries to pacify supporters

**By GEORGE CAULKIN AND STEPHEN WOOD**

RUUD GULLIT last night sought to dispel suggestions that his managerial regime at Newcastle United is semi-detached, denying that his frequent absences from St James' Park amounted to a lack of commitment to the job. He remains "totally dedicated to the success" of the FA Carling Premiership club, he said.

Gullit, who was responding to increasing disquiet about his cosmopolitan personal life, has courted from his Amsterdam home since replacing Kenny Dalglish last August, working from a hotel room during his stints on Tyreside.

It has emerged that, with the blessing of the club, the Newcastle manager left for Holland last Sunday and will not return to the North East until shortly before the match against Leeds United on Boxing Day.

"It is true that up until now, my family has remained in Amsterdam and, as a father, I felt it only natural for me to spend a few days at this important time of year with Estelle [his girlfriend] and my baby daughter," Gullit said in a statement. "However, I want to reassure Newcastle United supporters that my commitment to the club, its players and the fans remains 100 per cent at all times."

Blackburn Rovers are to make another attempt to sign Ashley Ward, the Barnsley striker. Blackburn have had one offer of £4.25 million, turned down.

It is understood that they will increase their original bid by £500,000 in an effort to persuade the Nationwide League first division club to part with the 25-year-old.

Manchester United have been linked with a move for Carlos Roa, the Argentina goalkeeper. United need to attract a new goalkeeper to Old Trafford by next summer to cover the loss of Peter Schmeichel, who plans to retire from English football.

Wolverhampton Wanderers have agreed personal terms with Havard Flo, the Norway striker. The first division club are close to agreeing a fee with Werder Bremen and are confident of completing the signing for around £750,000.

They are more pessimistic over the future of Steve Bull, their record goalscorer, whose career is threatened by an arthritic knee. Bull, 33, is seeking a second opinion from a specialist after the knee swelled up even before he could return to training after a recent operation.

### WORD-WATCHING

- Answers from page 33
- RANGLES  
 (c) Small stones given to a sporting hawk to improve its digestion.  
 SYZYGY  
 (a) An overall term to describe an alignment of the sun, the earth and another astronomical object.  
 CRISSELLING  
 (c) A progressive degradation of the surface to which some old glass is liable. It begins as a fine network of cracks. It is due to a defect in the glass itself.  
 TEKRO  
 (b) A range of metallic silk-faced wallpapers, looking like damask.
- SOLUTION TO WINNING MOVE**  
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English cricket is now so devalued that it has become a laughing stock

# Australians left longing for a proper Test

The Melbourne Test, which begins today, is one of the great events of the Australian sporting calendar. More than 75,000 people are expected to attend the first day, which is a celebration of cricket, sport, life and Australia's apparent invincibility. Their players end the year as they began it, masters of all they survey.

It could have been a better. Instead, England crawl here on their knees, as bondsmen, having lost two Tests out of three, saved from defeat in the first by a freak storm.

This is not so much a game of cricket as a victory parade. The Ashes are remaining in this country, metaphorically if not literally, and spectators in the vast concrete bowl of the MCG will not be shy about reminding England of their inability to give the Aussies a proper contest.

There is no hiding place, on the field or off. In a country that places more emphasis on sport than most, England are a laughing stock. Mocked for their palsied batting, their toothless bowling, their butterfingers and their general air of submission, the players are written off as the dregs of a corrupted county system. It is increasingly hard to persuade Australians that some of them are actually good players.

Daily, in the public prints, correspondents, columnists, leader writers and readers lap up the humiliation, though not all get it right. One writer, referring to the Barmy Army as "wall-to-wall Hugh Grants", clearly puts salt on his cornflakes and sugar on his chips.

## MICHAEL HENDERSON IN AUSTRALIA



national newspaper does not label his column "the hammer of the English", though it could. For years Coward has lambasted the English game for its mediocrity, insularity and what he calls "cultural elitism". The last tour of England he undertook was in 1985, nor is he in a hurry to return. To him the sub-continent is far more appealing.

It may appear that he is just an awkward Aussie, but there's more to it. He is, in fact, a generous man and a thoughtful one. There is no reflexive resentment, just a feeling of sadness that one of cricket's mighty oaks has withered so. Indeed, if George Sand was right when she wrote that "indignation is the highest form of love", he may like us more than he lets on.

He said: "It may look as though I am an Anglophobe, which is not the case. It is really indignation, disappointment. It is just too easy for Australia. I can feel the pain, because we went through it ourselves, and ten years later the Australians have become strong again."

"There is a hollowness about it all. We are proud people, and proud cricketers, but we enjoy a contest. We want to be tested. There is a sense of inevitability about this series and there is a risk of financial embarrassment to go to Melbourne and Sydney, the two most important Test matches, over Christmas and the new year, with the series decided. It would have been even more embarrassing but for the storm in Brisbane."

"What I fear is that this series is losing its relevance. The matters of tradition and sentiment are important but I don't think that tradition alone can sustain the Ashes. The thing that hurts and frustrates me is that nothing seems to be changing in England. People used to look towards England for direction but what have they offered the cricket world as the senior statesman of the game in the past 20 years?"

The Australian public admire some people in this team. They admire Atherton, remember Gough for what he did here four years ago and, from afar, they admire Stewart, though he has never scored many runs in Australia. But people here have seen the likes of Tom Moody, a peripheral Test player of the past, make thousands of runs in England. Darren Lehmann, who has had great success there, has yet to establish himself in the Test team.

"County cricket, which was once seen as a pre-eminence competition, is not that any longer. John Buchanan was critical when he came back from his season at Middlesex and Dave Gilbert has attacked what he called the tiredness of mind. It is a job rather than a celebration of cricket. Perhaps it reflects the nature of what is happening in the country. England is not so confident as a nation as it once was."



Cork illustrates the air of submission, hanging his head after being hit for four in Hobart

Nobody could accuse Australia of lacking self-confidence. There is no self-abasement in this country, unlike England, and their cricketers are lionised. However, even their game was on the ropes in the early Eighties, burnt by

the fire of World Series Cricket and the rebel tour of South Africa. As the cricket has renewed itself, the country has changed immensely from the nation of 20 years ago, part of what Coward called "the Asianification of the country".

He added: "Australia went to hell and back as a consequence of World Series Cricket and needed a period of stability to recover. During the Adelaide Test it was 14 years to the week that Allan Border took over as the 38th Austral-

ian captain, and Mark Taylor is now the 39th. In 14 years we have had two captains." England are on their seventh.

"The Australians saw the need to embrace change and we have done it vigorously. The English have begun to follow, with things like cricket under lights, coloured clothing and the like. The game must be made more relevant to the modern consumer. It has to cope with other sports and other recreational activities. In England I suspect the amount of money poured into soccer has changed it."

"Within the context of cricket there has been a growing awareness of our proximity to the Pacific. There is a sense that once England joined the European Community a lot of Australians felt differently towards it. There was a sense of abandonment, more in New Zealand than here, but it persists."

## Tradition and sentiment alone are not enough to sustain the Ashes'

As administrators from countries such as South Africa and India begin to play a more prominent part in the game's reconstruction, and the order changes, England are vulnerable, Coward believes. In his view they have done little to advance the game in places such as Sri Lanka and may be paid in kind for that neglect.

"Their attitude towards Sri Lanka is unforgivable and smacks of cultural elitism. Those countries are mindful of the indifference they have suffered from in the past. As we go into the 21st century, a lot of the initiative is coming from those countries."

## SPORT IN BRIEF

### German regatta moved to Belgium

**ROWING:** Fisa, the international governing body, announced yesterday that it has moved the first World Cup regatta of next year (from May 28 to 30) from Germany to Belgium (Mike Rosewell writes). Munich has staged the first World Cup regatta of the season for the past two years but a threatened boycott by some German rowers, who openly object to Fisa's advertising rules, have led to the switch of venue from Germany "to prevent any further negative impacts by these rowers".  
 □ Tim Foster, a member of the Great Britain world champion coxless four, has had a back operation and is likely to be out of the boat for two months.

**MOTOR RACING:** British American Racing has challenged the International Automobile Federation over its recent ruling that Formula One teams must run their cars in substantially similar liveries. The new team, who are believed to want to field their two cars in colours representing different cigarette brands, believe that the regulation inhibits commercial freedom when dealing with potential sponsors.

**FOOTBALL:** Scotland's top ten clubs will receive a £2.5 million windfall from the Scottish Premier League today as the second slice of broadcasting revenue is distributed. The money is paid out in relation to television appearances made by each club.

**ATHLETICS:** Tessa Sanderson, the 1984 Olympic javelin gold medal-winner, and Bridgid Simmonds, the chief executive of Business in Sport and Leisure, have been appointed members of the English Sports Council.

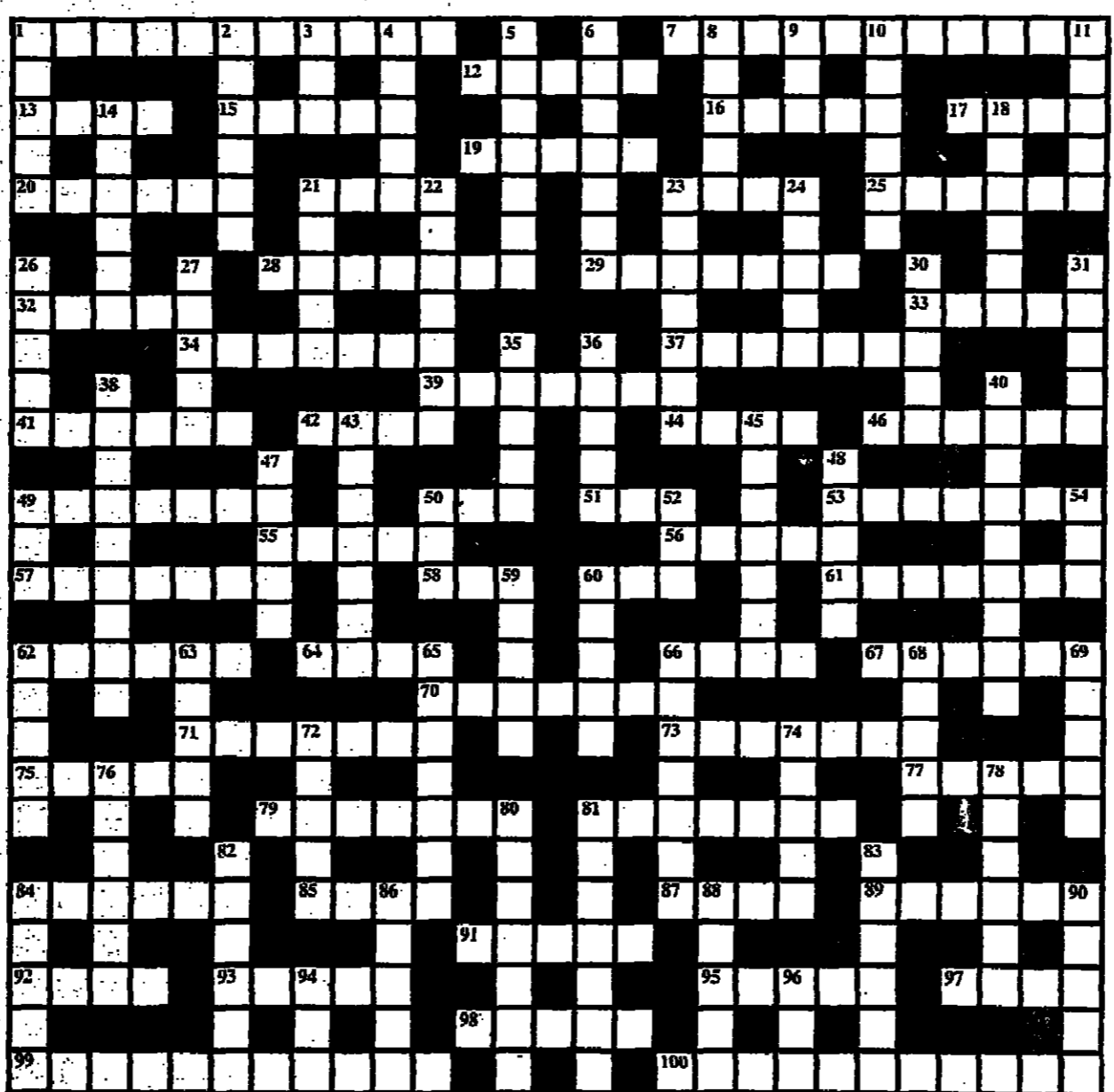
# Test your knowledge with the Jumbo sports crossword

- ACROSS
- 1 He was unquestionably No 1 in 1966 (6,5)
  - 7 Is as natural as seeking the old enemy (11)
  - 12 Jack's game! (5)
  - 13 Sounds the sort of pitch that would suit Shane (4)
  - 15 Terry, who managed both Spurs and Arsenal (5)
  - 16 Is it a kind of game when it sits to give the results? (5)
  - 17 Dreaded double for batsmen (4)
  - 19 Where Tendulkar is a run machine (5)
  - 20 Quickest form of dismissal? (3,3)
  - 21 Plays with the opponent (4)
  - 23 Charlotte, the first woman to ride in the Grand National (4)
  - 25 I'm pure for an appealing job (6)
  - 28 First Englishman to wear the yellow jersey in the Tour de France (7)
  - 29 Debonair wing play (7)
  - 32 Jim, wicketkeeper who followed his father into the Sussex and England teams (5)
  - 33 Additional run (5)
  - 34 American football for the intelligentsia? (7)
  - 37 Send a son to the golf pro for them, perhaps (7)
  - 39 Sounds a stylish obstacle on the racetrack (7)
  - 41 What the gymnast does, sometimes awkwardly (6)
  - 42 See the ball on it? (4)
  - 44 World champion Fu Mingxia will do it from on high (4)
  - 46 Gate at Bristol (6)
  - 48 Some art from Matthews, for instance (7)
  - 50 There are those who are sent in to do it (3)
  - 51 Pristine ball (3)
  - 53 Old Trafford brother (7)
  - 55 This must be the location for the kick (5)
  - 56 Is Jimmy White, for example, a man of this cloth? (5)
  - 57 Attempt to cross it! (3,4)
  - 58 Is he desperate to be first at judo? (3)



- 60 Fills the gap for the drivers' union! (3)
- 61 Match that can have you in knots? (1,3,3)
- 62 Derby-winning effort by Troy! (6)
- 64 It can be wet, dry and often changed (4)
- 66 Kournikova, the acceptable face of tennis (4)
- 67 Sporting charmer hardly out of the nursery! (6)
- 70 Hit reds for the player who hesitates (7)
- 71 Lands in the nether regions (4,3)
- 73 Hot Rose, the netball striker? (7)
- 75 It has to be won, and is not an hereditary one (5)
- 77 Once a target for the big racing ships (5)
- 79 The one in charge takes it (7)
- 81 Bruce on with the lifting ball (7)
- 84 Ali and Foreman had one in the jungle (6)
- 85 Captains give one before the action begins (4)
- 87 Beats the opposition under the sun? (4)
- 89 Norman, who conquered with bite! (6)
- 91 Where to go for a great rum? (5)
- 92 Steve might wear one in the amateur ring (4)
- 93 Golf speak for a conceded putt (5)
- 95 Paolo, top goalscorer in the 1982 World Cup (5)

Do you think you know your sports? The Jumbo Sports Crossword is a challenging and fun way to test your knowledge. The book is published by Ebury Press at £14.99 (mailorder £12.00). Five more runners-up will win copies of *The Spirit Of Football*, a photographic record by the Sportsphoto agency (Kensington West Productions, £14.99). Send your completed crossword, by January 15, 1999, with your details to: Jumbo Sports Crossword, Sports Department, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The solution and winners will be published on Wednesday, January 20. The Sports Editor's decision is final. Usual Times rules apply.



COMPILED BY NORMAN GILLER

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DAYTIME TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_



CHRISTMAS DAY



Babe charts the adventures of a young pig whose ambition is to become a sheepdog (BBC1, 7pm)



Monica Zamora stars as the Sugar Plum Cherry in the jazz-inspired ballet Nutcracker Sweeties (BBC2, 5.30pm)



Denise Van Outen and Neil Morrissey star in the pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk (ITV, 4.10pm)

6.00am Children's BBC: Teletubbies 6.25 Noddy in Toyland 7.20 PJ's Unfunny Christmas... 11.00 Miracle on 34th Street... 1.50 News (1) (79555833)...

6.15am The Great Lie (1941) Oscar-winning melodrama, starring Bette Davis... 8.00 The Treasure of the Sierra Madre (1948) John Huston's classic starring Humphrey Bogart... 10.00 Off Get Off Our Train... 11.45 Dodge City (1939) Classic western starring Errol Flynn...

5.55am ITN Morning News (9433981) 6.00 GMTV (1936309) 9.25 Christmas Day in the Morning (1) (8155583) 10.20 CITV: Sooty and Co Christmas Special (2962187) 11.00 Percy the Park Keeper... 1.45 The Spice Girls Live at Wembley... 3.00 The Queen The annual address (1) (1842922)...

As HTV West except: 10.39pm Weather (950458) As HTV West all day As HTV West all day As HTV West all day As HTV West all day... 5.55am Sesame Street (43678496) 7.00 For Better, For Worse (4828851)...

5.25am Gagarin 5.35 Two Stupid Dogs (1) 5.55 Sesame Street 7.00 For Better, For Worse (1) 7.30 Max Bear's Christmas (1) 8.00 The Big Breakfast... 9.55 Swallows and Amazons (1973) Children's adventure, starring Virginia McKenna... 11.40 The Bear Necessity... 12.10pm Planted Plant (1) (8742718)...

6.00am The Wind in the Willows (1) 6.25 Roobarb (1) 6.30 Dapplefoot Farm (1) 7.00 Wizzle's House (1) 7.30 Mikshakel 7.30 Hawkazoo (1) 8.00 George of the Jungle (1) 8.30 Writ-as-as 9.00 Loggerheads (1) 9.30 USA High (1) 9.50 Alpha Zone Christmas Special... 10.20 The Revelation Game... 10.50 Scrooge (1951) Adaptation of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Alastair Sims... 12.30pm Family Affairs (1) (1) (209019)...

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RADIO 1 (BBC) 9.00am Zoo Ball's Christmas Breakfast 12.00am Live From 2.00pm A Top Christmas 4.00am Chris Moyles's Alternative Christmas 11.00am Westwood: Radio 1's Show 2.00pm Elio and Grovesville 4.00am Emma B

RADIO 2 (BBC) 6.00am Roger Royle 8.00 Good Morning Christmas 10.00 Terry Wogan's Christmas Special 11.00am Ken Bruce 2.00pm The Musical Christmas 3.00pm The Christmas Special 3.00pm The Queen 3.10 Ed Stewart 5.00 Christmas with Ceeline 6.00m Pavilion in Conversation with: Paul Gambaccini 7.00 Hubert Groody 8.00 Christmas at Bath Abbey The BBC Concert Orchestra, led by Martin Lloyd-Evans 9.15 Alan Freeman The Greatest Christmas Eve 10.15 Listen to the Radio 2's Christmas 11.00m Peace on Earth 12.00m Lynn Parsons 4.00am Lara Sharma

RADIO 3 (BBC) 6.00am On Air Patrice Trelawny presents music for Christmas morning 9.00 Masterworks with Peter Hootby 10.30 Artist of the Week: James Galway (1) 11.00 Sound Stories: The Christmas Story with Richard Bayle 12.00 Composer of the Week: Christmas 1.00pm Lunchtime Concert: Christopher Malcolm, baritone, Andrew Smith, piano 2.00m Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols From King's College, Cambridge (1) 3.40m In Terra Part: Gerald Finzi's Christmas cantata (1) 4.45 Music to Die For: Adam Thorpe (148) 5.00 A Musical Christmas: A collection of music for Christmas past and present 5.30 Music Rooms: Natalie Wheen discovers a corner of Greece near Brighton (15/10) 6.00 Discovering Music with Leonard Slatkin: Leonard Slatkin and the BBC Philharmonic explore themes and variations (5/10) 7.00 Christmas Cookery: Festive classic recipes and recordings of the 1930s 7.30 Performance on 3 From 20, given on August 1: Gershwin (Porgy and Bess) with Wilma White, bass, Cynthia Haymon, soprano, Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Wayne Marshall (1) 10.50 Postscript: Rainer Hersch's 20th-Century Perspective (5/5) 11.10 Schumann (Five Pieces in Folk Style, Op. 102) Mstislav Rostropovich, cello 12.00m Composer of the Week: Bach (1) 1.00am Through the Night with Donald Macleod

RADIO 4 (BBC) 5.30am World News 5.35 Shipping 5.40 Inshore Forecast 5.45 Prayer for the Day 5.47 Farming Today 6.00 Something Understood with Mark Tully 7.00 Open Country: Richard Unidge reflects on rural Christmas through the ages 8.00 Joy to the World: Fergie Wray looks at the history of the carol 8.00 Christmas Morning Service Live from the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool, with the Most Rev. Patrick Kelly, Director of Music: Meyven Cousins 10.45 Women's Hour with: Jemma Murray and guests 11.00 Christmas Parrot: Cinderella and Her Very Ugly Sisters: The classic tale as retold by Stewart Pittman and Debbie Barham 12.00 (FM) News 12.05pm Five Sory 1 Haven't a Clue: Christmas Special: Humphrey Lyttelton presents highlights from the award-winning series 12.00 (LW) News Headlines: Shipping Forecast 12.30 Screen Test: Seasonal edition and first semi-final of the challenging film quiz 1.00m Christmas with Nicky Carr 1.02m Derek Cooper's Christmas Lunch: Seasonal memories of The Food Programme, featuring trips to Stockholm, Valparaiso and Hong Kong 2.00m The Archers: Another chance to hear yesterday's edition (1) 2.30m The General: Apes by Derek Briggs: Two lab chimps return to Earth after a 40-year sojourn in space - with the power to heal a sick child 3.45 Colonel Clay: Master of Disguise (1/4) 4.00 The Queen: The annual address, followed by the national anthem (1) 4.10 Christmas: A Christmas with Tom Bennett 4.30m A Night with Orla and Lancelotti and Chris Spering (1) 5.25 Life on Christmas: Steve Forster reads his rare Christmas stories 6.00m O'Clock News 6.05m Five Sory 1 Haven't a Clue: Christmas Special (1) 6.30m News Quiz: our monthly Christmas quiz 7.00 The Archers: 7.15 Front Row with Mark Lawson and Frances Stone 7.45 Under One Roof: Adapted from Michael Hanson's original stories (1) 8.00 Correspondents: Look Ahead: A preview of what could be in store for 1999 8.45 Letter from America by Alastair Cooke 9.00 Christmas Parrot: Cinderella and Her Very Ugly Sisters (1) 10.00m With Pleasure at Christmas with Sue MacGregor (1) 10.45 Christmas: A Christmas at Badcliffe: The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Andersen (1) 11.00m Late Night on 4: The Modern Mial (1) 11.30 Revealed: Lives: Frank Delaney explores the intriguing life of Gilbert White (1) 11.45 Christmas Night Meditation with the poet Les Murray 12.00m (FM) News 12.05pm Five Sory 1 Haven't a Clue: Christmas Special (1) 12.00 (LW) Test Match Special: Australia v England, Fourth Test, day one 12.30pm (FM) The Late Book: Out of her Senses by the Times columnist Lynne Truss: Mystery forecasts a crime at Christmas 12.45 (FM) Shipping Forecast 1.00 (FM) As World Service

RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC) 5.00am Brief Lives (1) 6.00 The Life and Death of Belfast Celtic (1) 7.00 Breakfast 9.00 Sportscast 10.00 The Best of Campbell 12.00m Death of Belfast Celtic (1) All Day with Christy O'Brien 1.00m The Best of Fosse and Co. 6.00m The Best of Entertainment: Lucy Longhurst with recollections of 1998 8.00m A Green Christmas with Alan Green and celebrity guests 9.00m Brief Lives (1) 10.00m 20th-Century Pop Family Life 11.00m Late Night Live 1.00am Up All Night 4.00 Extra Time (1)

BBCC1, BBCC2, HTV, CENTRAL, CHANNEL 5, CHANNEL 4, BBC WORLD SERVICE, CLASSIC FM, VIRGIN, TALK RADIO, SKY SPORTS 2, SKY SPORTS 3, UK GOLD, EUROSPORT, FOX KIDS NETWORK, NICKELODEON, THE SCFI CHANNEL



DARTS 31

Gulliver travels lonely road to top of world

SPORT

THURSDAY DECEMBER 24 1998

RACING 32-34

Thornton plans new chapter for tall story

Stewart tackles crisis of confidence

FROM ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT, IN MELBOURNE

ON A day when the denisation here grew deafening and when newspaper amused themselves by picking putative Australia third XIs claimed to be good enough to win the Ashes, it was hard to be other than pessimistic about England's prospects of festive cheer. They could scarcely be approaching the Boxing Day start of the fourth Test match at a lower ebb, or with more valid apprehensions about the character of the side.

their one-day win in Canberra a week ago. He promised that a "very open and honest" team meeting would be held this morning and added: "You don't have to be too bright to work out what might be said."

damental tactical switch may yet be applied if the Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch indicates a game dominated by seam bowling. If that is the conclusion, England will go in with four seam bowlers and Warren Hegg keeping wicket. There will be no spin bowler and Mark Butcher will drop down the order to No 6. The greater likelihood, though, is that the customary dry, slow Melbourne pitch will persuade a less dramatic selection. England's one concession to the need to win the two remaining Tests being the inclusion of a fifth specialist bowler at the expense of the woebegone John Crawley.

"The seventh batter hasn't worked and there is no genuine all-rounder pushing for selection, so we should just pick the best five bowlers," Stewart said. "Tudor has scored second-team hundreds and the talent is there." Tudor, indeed, has been working assiduously on his batting with the help of Mark Ramprakash, who can himself expect promotion to No 4 here as recognition of his consistent and resourceful batting through the series. Nasser Hussain will not be

moved from his favoured position at No 3, no matter what role Stewart eventually plays. Privately, the captain would relish returning to the opening job that suits his game best. He has made no secret of his preference for the position and the accumulation of demands on his time is now so daunting that I suspect he would readily relinquish the wicketkeeping if he thought it was in the interest of the team. On this issue, indeed, he would happily withdraw from selection and let others make the decision for him.

The question of Stewart's responsibilities recurs in each series England play, especially when things go awry. Here, though, the urgency is evident and the cure unclear, for the speed with which the Ashes have once more been conceded has had a deep and alarming effect on self-belief. Stewart admitted as much, voicing the inner doubts

common to most of his players when Australia are the opponents. "You feel as though you are doing the same things as usual without the same results and you have to think long and hard about why that is happening."

5.00am Chr... 5.30am Chr... 6.00am Chr... 6.30am Chr... 7.00am Chr... 7.30am Chr... 8.00am Chr... 8.30am Chr... 9.00am Chr... 9.30am Chr... 10.00am Chr... 10.30am Chr... 11.00am Chr... 11.30am Chr... 12.00am Chr... 12.30am Chr... 1.00am Chr... 1.30am Chr... 2.00am Chr... 2.30am Chr... 3.00am Chr... 3.30am Chr... 4.00am Chr... 4.30am Chr... 5.00am Chr... 5.30am Chr... 6.00am Chr... 6.30am Chr... 7.00am Chr... 7.30am Chr... 8.00am Chr... 8.30am Chr... 9.00am Chr... 9.30am Chr... 10.00am Chr... 10.30am Chr... 11.00am Chr... 11.30am Chr... 12.00am Chr... 12.30am Chr...



Girl power: Rachel Shore, left, Rebecca, her nine-year-old sister, centre, and Rachel Millard, of Cynon Valley indoor bowls club, prepare to face England. Photograph: Huw Evans

Wales bowlers put their faith in three Rs

THOSE who run bowls have long been at pains to point out that theirs is not an old man's game, but the announcement of the Wales squad to take on England in the annual under-25 women's indoor international still came as a shock. The inclusion of Rebecca Shore, who celebrated her ninth birthday last month, creates a record, but, in addition, she will be surrounded by a clutch of other girls who are still at primary school.

David Rhys Jones on the girls of nine and ten picked to face England

Yesterday, "Our hands are too small for big bowls, but the club has a stock of smaller ones that we can use." Further west, at the Dinewr club in Ammanford, Angharad Jones, another ten-year-old, and Hannah Smith, who is 12, are preparing for the big day when they will face England, alongside their clubmate, Nicola Haines, who, at 17, is regarded as a veteran.

youngsters will play because 16 of the 20-strong squad will be required to take part. The Shore sisters ventured down to the bowls club at the invitation of their grandparents, Be'la and Marlene Bejal, and took to the game instantly. They even persuaded Chris and Ella Shore, their paternal grandparents, to give it a try -- and now they are also hooked.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

Crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-24 and a solution key below.

ACROSS 1 Don't tell anyone! (4,3,4) 8 Christmas... 9 Louis... 10... but... (4) 11 Herbert... WW2 Home Secretary (8) 13 Non-boarder pupil (3,3) 14 Against (another team) (6) 17 American holiday (5) 19... a... (4) 22 Subdivision of genus (7) 23 Light-splitting glass (5) 24 Of brilliant appearance (11) DOWN 1 Swaggingly masculine (5) SOLUTION TO NO 1596 ACROSS: 1 Boastful 5 Idol 9 Otter 10 Drought 11 Cluster 12 Stall 13 Diaghilev 18 Expat 20 Tantrum 22 Succumb 23 Drape 24 Mirth 25 Demented DOWN: 1 Brooch 2 Astound 3 Tarot 4 Under the table 6 Dogma 7 Let fly 8 Consul 14 Arthur 15 Variant 16 Jetsam 17 Impend 19 Picot 21 Nudge

Platt hopes to cut deal with Sharpe

DAVID PLATT has returned to England in an attempt to make his first signing as the coach of Sampdoria by opening talks with Lee Sharpe. The former England international winger is out of favour at Leeds United and is believed to relish the opportunity of a new start in Italy. Sharpe, 27, has struggled at Elland Road since moving across the Pennines from Manchester United and did not make a league appearance last season after suffering a serious knee injury. Platt, who will begin negotiations with the player today, is keen to take him to Genoa on loan until the end of the season, with a view to a permanent deal.

Williams wins battle of the baize

REX WILLIAMS retained the chairmanship of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA) yesterday, ensuring that the political divisions that have blighted the game throughout 1998 will continue into the new year. The annual meeting of the WPBSA, held at the Stratallan Hotel, Birmingham, began at noon and ended about 90 minutes later. However, because of an arcane voting system, it was almost 5pm before the full composition of the board was determined. Although Williams, unpopular with many leading players, including Stephen Hendry and Steve Davis, was not required to stand for re-election to the WPBSA board of directors himself, he could have been forced to surrender the chair had enough of his loyalists failed to gain a seat.

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BOXING DAY 12 PAGES THE BEST FOOTBALL TABLE IN THE WORLD...EVER! MONDAY Make a date with the sports calendar for 1999 Plus top columnists Gary Neville and Robert Elms